THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

1049

DISCIPLINE.

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Lately Published, by the same Author,

SELF-CONTROL,

A NOVEL.

FOURTH EDITION.

In Three Volumes 8vo. Price L. 1, 4s. boards.

DISCIPLINE:

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SELF-CONTROL."

All-pitying Heaven,
Severe in mercy, chastening in its love,
Ofttimes in dark and awful visitation
Doth interpose; and leads the wanderer back
To the straight path.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

THIRD EDITION.

VOLUME I.

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PREFACE.

In the following pages, an attempt is made to amuse; with what success, the author has no means of judging. But she has not confined her aim to the conveying of what is called innocent amusement. It may be doubted how far this term is applicable to any manner of employing time, which, without exercising the rational or moral faculties, cherishes the appetite for fiction, and the habit of reading without thought. The appetite for fiction is indeed universal, and has unfortunately been made the occasion of conveying poison of every description into the youthful mind. Why must the antidote be confined to such forms as are sure to

be rejected by those who need it the most? There is high authority for using fable as the vehicle of important, even of solemn truth; and to this purpose it is here applied without hesitation. The subject was chosen chiefly on account of its connection with that of Self-Control; the whole moral and religious discipline of life being intended to form those habits of self-command, in which Laura excelled, and in which Ellen Percy is so miserably defective. Though in the present work, that constant attention to unity of design may be relaxed, which perhaps encumbered the former, by forcing every character to serve either as illustration or contrast, it is hoped that the main purpose is never entirely forsaken.

For an endeavour to shew the necessity and the progress of religious principle, no apology seems requisite. Even admitting for a moment that this principle had no foundation in truth, still it cannot be denied, that it influences the actions and sentiments of all the best, and many of the wisest of mankind; thus affecting the opinions, at least, of the multitude also. A

picture of human life then, which excludes this great agent, is like a system of anatomy in which the heart is forgotten. The inferior parts may be described with a truth which is acknowledged by every observer; with a skill which delights while it instructs; but the description, however accurate, is incomplete. It cannot convey a full idea of man as he appears in a country where Christianity is known.

Perhaps this subject, however important and useful in its own place, may be accounted too serious for a work of this kind. If it be objected, that the narrative of a change of the heart,

" From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,"

is too solemn for the pastime of an idle hour; the author can only answer, that she meant it for something better. But if the objection be levelled against the agent which is represented as effecting this change, she must reply, that no choice remained to her; since she is persuaded, that all the annals of mankind cannot furnish an instance of a permanent, universal,

and consistent improvement in human character, effected through any other principle than that to which she has ascribed the reformation of Ellen Percy.

The author cannot help expressing a strong feeling of regret, that the close of her story may, from its subject, seem to provoke a comparison which it is most truly her interest to avoid. The ground which she has there taken is as yet so little trodden, that she cannot hope to escape reminding the reader of the more successful adventurers who have attempted it before her. Perhaps she ought rather to say the single adventurer; for the manners so admirably described in "The Cottagers of Glenburnie," are those of a district where Highland peculiarities have yielded to constant intercourse with strangers; and the intelligent "Essays on the Manners and Superstitions of the Highlanders," belong to a different class of works from the present. The author of Waverley, alone, has incorporated with a fictitious story the characteristic manners of the Gael. Whatever may be the

faults of the following pages, the author is persuaded that no one who peruses them will believe her to be so destitute of common understanding, as to aim at competition where it were so truly absurd, or to intend imitation where imitation were so hopeless. Yet she owes it to herself to state, that the story of Discipline has been planned for years; that the whole held very nearly its present form before she knew the subject of Waverley; and that the alteration of one Christian name is the only change which has been made in consequence of her acquaintance with that masterly performance. Highly indeed would she have been flattered, had the resemblance proved strong enough to require any other.

Edinburgh, November 1814.

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DISCIPLINE.

CHAP. I.

—I was wayward, bold, and wild;
A self-willed imp; a grandame's child;
But, half a plague and half a jest,
Was still endured, beloved, carest.

WALTER SCOTT.

I HAVE heard it remarked, that he who writes his own history, ought to possess Irish humour, Scotch prudence, and English sincerity;—the first, that his work may be read; the second, that it may be read without injury to himself; the third, that the perusal of it may be profitable to others. I might, perhaps with truth declare, that I possess only the last of these qualifications. But, besides that my readers will probably take the liberty of estimating for

themselves my merits as a narrator, I suspect, that professions of humility may possibly deceive the professor himself; and that, while I am honestly confessing my disqualifications, I may be secretly indemnifying my pride, by glorying in the candour of my confession.

Any expression of self-abasement might, indeed, appear peculiarly misplaced as a preface to whole volumes of egotism; the world being generally uncharitable enough to believe, that vanity may somewhat influence him who chooses himself for his theme. Nor can I be certain that this charge is wholly inapplicable to me; since it is notorious to common observation, that, rather than forego their darling subject, the vain will expatiate even on their errors. A better motive, however, mingles with those which impel me to relate my story. It is no unworthy feeling which leads such as are indebted beyond return, to tell of the benefits they have received; or which prompts one who has escaped from eminent peril, to warn others of the danger of their way.

It is, I believe, usual with those who undertake to be their own biographers, to begin with tracing their illustrious descent. I fear this portion of my history must be compiled from very scanty materials; for my father, the only one of the race who was ever known to me, never mentioned his family, except to preface a philippic against all dignities in church and state. Against these he objected, as fostering "that aristocratical contumely, which flesh and blood cannot endure;" a vice which I have heard him declare to be, above all others, the object of his special antipathy. For this selection, which will probably obtain sympathy only from the base-born, my father was not without reason; for, to the pride of birth it was doubtless owing that my grandfather, a cadet of an ancient family, was doomed to starve upon a curacy, in revenge for his contaminating the blood of the Percys by an unequal alliance; and, when disappointment and privation had brought him to an early grave, it was probably the same sentiment which induced his relations to prolong his punishment in the person of his

widow and infants, who, with all possible dignity and unconcern, were left to their fate. My father, therefore, began the world with very slender advantages; an accident of which he was so far from being ashamed, that he often triumphantly recorded it, ascribing his subsequent affluence to his own skill and diligence alone.

He was, as I first recollect him, a muscular dark-complexioned man, with a keen black eye, cased in an extraordinary perplexity of wrinkle, and shaded by a heavy beetling eyebrow. The peculiarity of his face was a certain arching near the corner of his upper lip, to which it was probably owing that a smile did not improve his countenance; but this was of the less consequence, as he did not often smile. He had, indeed, arrived at that age when gravity is at least excusable; although no trace of infirmity appeared in his portly figure and strong sounding tread.

His whole appearance and demeanour were an apt contrast to those of my mother, in whose youthful form and features symmetry gained a charm from that character

of fragility which presages untimely decay, and that air of melancholy which seems to welcome decline. I have her figure now before me. I recollect the tender brightness of her eyes, as laying her hand upon my head, she raised them silently to heaven. I love to remember the fine flush that was called to her cheek by the fervour of the half-uttered blessing. She was, in truth, a gentle being; and bore my wayward humour with an angel's patience. But she exercised a control too gentle over a spirit which needed to be reined by a firmer hand than her's. She shrunk from bestowing even merited reproof, and never inflicted pain without suffering much more than she caused. Yet, let not these relentings of nature be called weakness—or if the stern moralist refuse to spare, let it disarm his severity, to learn that I was an only child.

I know not whether it was owing to the carelessness of nurses, or the depravity of waiting-maids, or whether, "to say all, nature herself wrought in me so;" but, from the earliest period of my recollection, I fur-

nished an instance at least, if not a proof, of the corruption of human kind; being proud, petulant, and rebellious. Some will probably think the growth of such propensities no more unaccountable than that of briars and thorns; being prepared from their own experience and observation, to expect that both should spring without any particular culture. But whoever is dissatisfied with this compendious deduction, may trace my faults to certain accidents in my early education.

I was, of course, a person of infinite importance to my mother. While she was present, her eye followed my every motion, and watched every turn of my countenance. Anxious to anticipate every wish, and vigilant to relieve every difficulty, she never thought of allowing me to pay the natural penalties of impatience or self-indulgence. If one servant was driven away by my caprice, another attended my bidding. If my toys were demolished, new baubles were ready at my call. Even when my mother was reluctantly obliged to testify displeasure, her coldness quickly

yielded to my tears; and I early discovered, that I had only to persevere in the demonstration of obstinate sorrow, in order to obtain all the privileges of the party offended. When she was obliged to consign me to my maid, it was with earnest injunctions that I should be amused,—injunctions which it every day became more difficult to fulfil. Her return was always marked by fond inquiries into my proceedings during her absence; and I must do my attendants the justice to say, that their replies were quite as favourable as truth would permit. They were too politic to hazard, at once, my favour and hers, by being officiously censorious. On the contrary they knew how to ingratiate themselves, by rehearsing my witticisms, with such additions and improvements as made my original property in them rather doubtful. My mother, pleased with the imposition, usually listened with delight; or, if she suspected the fraud, was too gentle to repulse it with severity, and too partial herself, to blame what she ascribed to a kindred partiality. On my father's return from the

counting-house, my double rectified *bon mots* were commonly repeated to him, in accents low enough to draw my attention, as to somewhat not intended for my ear, yet so distinct as not to baulk my curiosity. This record of my wit served a triple purpose. It confirmed my opinion of my own consequence, and of the vast importance of whatever I was pleased to say or do: it strengthened the testimony which my mother's visitors bore to my miraculous prematurity; and it established in my mind that association so favourable to feminine character, between repartee and applause!

To own the truth, my mother lay under strong temptation to report my sallies, for my father always listened to them with symptoms of pleasure. They sometimes caused his countenance to relax into a smile; and sometimes, either when they were more particularly brilliant, or his spirits in a more harmonious tone, he would say, "Come Fanny, get me something nice for supper, and keep Ellen in good humour, and I wont go to the club to-night." He generally, however, had

reason to repent of this resolution; for though my mother performed her part to perfection, I not unfrequently experienced, in my father's presence, that restraint which has fettered elder wits under a consciousness of being expected to entertain. Or, if my efforts were more successful, he commonly closed his declining eulogiums by saying, "It is a confounded pity she is a girl. If she had been of the right sort, she might have got into Parliament and made a figure with the best of them. But now what use is her sense of?"—"I hope it will contribute to her happiness," said my mother, sighing as if she had thought the fulfilment of her hope a little doubtful. "Poh!" quoth my father, "no fear of her happiness. Wont she have two hundred thousand pounds, and never know the trouble of earning it, nor need to do one thing from morning to night but amuse herself?" My mother made no answer:—so by this and similar conversations, a most just and desirable connection was formed in my mind between the ideas of amusement and happiness; of labour and misery.

If to such culture as this I owed the seeds of my besetting sins, at least, it must be owned that the soil was propitious, for the bitter root spread with disastrous vigour; striking so deep, that the iron grasp of adversity, the giant strength of awakened conscience, have failed to tear it wholly from the heart, though they have crushed its outward luxuriance.

Self-importance was fixed in my mind long before I could examine the grounds of this preposterous sentiment. It could not properly be said to rest on my talents, my beauty, or my prospects. Though these had each its full value in my estimation, they were but the trappings of my idol, which, like other idols, owed its dignity chiefly to the misjudging worship which I saw it receive. Children seldom reflect upon their own sentiments; and their self-conceit may, humanly speaking, be incurable, before they have an idea of its turpitude, or even of its existence. During the many years in which mine influenced every action and every thought, whilst it hourly appeared in the forms of arrogance, of self-

will, impatience of reproof, love of flattery, and love of sway, I should have heard of its very existence with an incredulous smile, or with an indignation which proved its power. And when at last I learnt to bestow on one of its modifications a name which the world agrees to treat with some respect, I could own that I was even "proud of my pride;" representing every instance of a contrary propensity as the badge of a servile and grovelling disposition.

Meanwhile my encroachments upon the peace and liberty of all who approached me, were permitted for the very reason which ought to have made them be repelled,—namely, that I was but a child! I was the dictatrix of my play-fellows, the tyrant of the servants, and the idolized despot of both my parents. My father, indeed, sometimes threatened transient rebellion, and announced opposition in the tone of one determined to conquer or die; but, though justice might be on his side, perseverance, a surer omen of success, was upon mine. Hour after hour, nay day after day, I could whine, pout, or importune, encouraged by

the remembrance of former victories. My obstinacy always at length prevailed, and of course gathered strength for future combat. Nor did it signify how trivial might be the matter originally in dispute. Nothing could be unimportant which opposed my sovereign will. That will became every day more imperious; so that, however much it governed others, I was myself still more its slave, knowing no rest or peace but in its gratification. I had often occasion to rue its triumphs, since not even the cares of my fond mother could always shield me from the consequences of my perverseness; and by the time I had reached my eighth year, I was one of the most troublesome, and, in spite of great natural hilarity of temper, at times one of the most unhappy beings, in that great metropolis which contains such variety of annoyance and of misery.

Upon retracing this sketch of the progress and consequences of my early education, I begin to fear, that groundless censure may fall upon the guardians of my infancy; and that defect of understanding or of prin-

ciple may be imputed to those who so unsuccessfully executed their trust. Let me hasten to remove such a prejudice. My father's understanding was respectable in the line to which he chose to confine its exertions. Indifference to my happiness or my improvement cannot surely be alleged against him, for I was the pride of his heart. I have seen him look up from his newspaper, while reading the "shipping intelligence," or the opposition speeches, to listen to the praises of my beauty or my talents; and, except when his temper was irritated by my perverseness, I was the object of his almost exclusive affection. But he was a man of business. His days were spent in the toil and bustle of commerce; and, if the evening brought him to his home, it was not unnatural that he should there seek domestic peace and relaxation, —a purpose wholly incompatible with the correction of a spoilt child. My mother was indeed one of the finer order of spirits. She had an elegant, a tender, a pious mind. Often did she strive to raise my young heart to Him from whom I had so

lately received my being. But, alas! her too partial fondness overlooked in her darling the growth of that pernicious weed, whose shade is deadly to every plant of celestial origin. She continued unconsciously to foster in me that spirit of pride, which may indeed admit the transient admiration of excellence, or even the passing fervours of gratitude, but which is manifestly opposite to vital piety;—to that piety which consists in a surrender of self-will, of self-righteousness, of self in every form, to the Divine justice, holiness, and sovereignty. It was, perhaps, for training us to this temper, of such difficult, yet such indispensable attainment, that the discipline of parental authority was intended. I have long seen reason to repent the folly which deprived me of the advantages of this useful apprenticeship, but this conviction has been the fruit of discipline far more painful.

In the mean time, my self-will was preparing for me an immediate punishment, and eventually a heavy, an irremediable misfortune. I had just entered my ninth year,

when one evening an acquaintance of my mother's sent me an invitation to her box in the theatre. As I had been for some days confined at home by a cold, and sore throat, my mother judged it proper to refuse. But the message had been unwarily delivered in my hearing, and I was clamorous for permission to go. The danger of compliance being, in this instance, manifest, my mother resisted my entreaties with unwonted firmness. After arguing with me, and soothing me in vain, she took the tone of calm command, and forbade me to urge her further. I then had recourse to a mode of attack which I had often found successful, and began to scream with all my might. My mother, though with tears in her eyes, ordered a servant to take me out of the room. But, at the indignity of plebeian coercion, my rage was so nearly convulsive, that, in terror, she consented to let me remain, upon condition of quietness. I was, however, so far from fulfilling my part of this compact, that my father, who returned in the midst of the contest, lost patience; and, turning somewhat testily to

my mother, said, "the child will do herself more harm by roaring there, than by going to fifty plays."

I observed, (for my agonies by no means precluded observation,) that my mother only replied by a look, which seemed to say that she could have spared this apostrophe; but my father growing a little more out of humour as he felt himself somewhat in the wrong, chose to answer to that look, by saying, in an angry tone, "It really becomes you well, Mrs Percy, to pretend that I spoil the child, when you know you can refuse her nothing."

"That, I fear," said my mother, with a sigh, "will be Ellen's great misfortune. Her dispositions seem such as to require restraint."

"Poh!" quoth my father, "her dispositions will do well enough. A woman is the better for a spice of the devil!"—an aphorism, which we have owed at first to some gentleman who, like my father, had slender experience in the pungencies of female character.

Gathering hopes from this dialogue, I

redoubled my vociferation, till my father, out of all patience, closed the contest, as others had been closed before, by saying, "Well, well, you perverse, ungovernable brat, do take your own way, and have done with it." I instantly profited by the permission, was dressed, and departed for theplay.

I paid dearly for my triumph. The first consequence of it was a dangerous fever. My mother,—but what words can do justice to the cares which saved my quivering life; what language shall paint the tenderness that watched my restless bed, and pillowed my aching temples on her bosom; that shielded from the light the burning eye, and warded from every sound the morbid ear; that persevered in these cares of love till nature failed beneath the toil, and till, with her own precious life, she had redeemed me from the grave! My mother—first, fondest love of my soul! is this barren, feeble record, the only return I can make for all thy matchless affection?

After hanging for three weeks upon the very brink of the grave, I recovered. But

anxiety and fatigue had struck to the gentlest, the kindest of hearts; and she to whom I twice owed my life, was removed from me before I had even a thought of my vast debt of gratitude. For some months her decline was visible to every eye, except that of the poor heedless being who had most reason to dread its progress. Yet even I, when I saw her fatigued with my importunate prattle, or exhausted by my noisy merriment, would check my spirits, soften my voice to a whisper, and steal round her sofa on tiptoe. Ages would not efface from my mind the tenderness with which she received these feeble attributes of an affection, alas! so dearly earned. By degrees, the constant intercourse which had been the blessing of my life was exchanged for short occasional visits to my mother's chamber. Again these were restricted to a few moments, while the morning lent her a short-lived vigour; and a few more, while I received her evening blessing.

At length three days passed, in which I had not seen my mother. I was then summoned to her presence; and, full of the im-

provident rapture of childhood, I bounded gaily to her apartment. But all gladness fled, when my mother, folding me in her arms, burst into a feeble cry, followed by the big convulsive sob, which her weakness was unable to repress. Many a time did she press her pale lips to every feature of my face; and often strove to speak, but found no utterance. An attendant, who was a stranger to me, now approached to remove me, saying, that my mother would injure herself. In the dread of being parted from her child, my fond parent found momentary strength; and, still clinging to me, hid her face on my shoulder, and became more composed. "Ellen," said she, in a feeble broken voice, "lift up thy little hands, and pray that we may meet again." Unconscious of her full meaning, I knelt down by her; and, resting my lifted hands upon her knees as I was wont to do while she taught me to utter my infant petitions, I said, "Oh! let mamma see her dear Ellen again!" Once more she made me repeat my simple prayer; then, bending over me, she rested her locked hands upon my

head, and the warmth of a last blessing burst into tremulous interrupted whispers. One only of these parting benedictions is imprinted on my mind. Wonder impressed it there at first; and, when nearly effaced by time, the impression was restored with force irresistible. These were the well remembered words: "Oh be kinder than her earthly parents, and shew thyself a father, though it be in chastising."

Many a tender wish did she breathe, long since forgotten by her thoughtless child, till at last the accents of love were again lost in the thick struggling sobs of weakness. Again the attendant offered to remove me; and I, half-wearied with the sadness of the scene, was not unwilling to go. Yet I tried to sooth a sorrow which I could not comprehend, by promising that I would soon return. Once more, with the strength of agony, my mother pressed me to her bosom; then, turning away her head, she pushed me gently from her. I was led from her chamber—the door closed—I heard again the feeble melancholy cry, and her voice was silent to my ear for ever.

The next day, I pleaded in vain to see my mother. Another came, and every face looked mournfully busy. I saw not my father; but the few domestics who approached me, gazed sadly on my childish pastime, or uttered an expression of pity, and hurried away. Unhappily, I scarcely knew why, I remembered my resort in all my little distresses, and insisted upon being admitted to my mother. My attendant long endeavoured to evade compliance, and when she found me resolute, was forced to tell the melancholy truth. She had so often combated my wilfulness by deceit, that I listened without believing; yet, when I saw her serious countenance, something like alarm added to my impatience, and, bursting from her, I flew to my mother's chamber.

The door which used to fly open at my signal was fastened, and no one answered my summons; but the key remained in the lock, and I soon procured admission. All seemed strangely altered since I saw it last, No trace appeared of my mother's presence. Here reigned the order and the stillness of

desolation. The curtains were drawn back, and the bed arranged with more than wonted care; yet it seemed pressed by the semblance of a human form. I drew away the cover, and beheld my mother's face. I thought she slept; yet the stern quietness of her repose was painful to me. "Wake, dear mamma," I hastily cried, and wondered when the smile of love answered not my call. I reached my hand to touch her cheek, and started at its coldness; yet, still childishly incredulous of my loss, I sprang upon the bed, and threw my arm round her neck.

A frightful shriek made me turn, and I beheld my attendant stretching her arms towards me, as if fearing to approach. Her looks of horror and alarm,—her incoherent expressions,—the motionless form before me, at last convinced me of the truth; and all the vulgar images of death and sepulture rushing on my mind, I burst into agonies of mingled grief and fear. To be carried hence by strangers, laid in the earth, shut out for ever from the light and from me!—I clung to the senseless clay, resolved, while

I had life, to shield my dear mother from such a fate.

My cries assembled the family, who attempted to withdraw me from the scene. In vain they endeavoured to persuade or to terrify me. I continued to hang on the bosom which had nourished me, and to mingle my cries of Mother! mother! with vows that I would never leave her, not though they should hide me with her in the earth. At last my father commanded the servants to remove me by force. In vain I struggled and shrieked in anguish. I was torn from her,—and the tie was severed for ever!

CHAP. II.

Such little wasps, and yet so full of spite;
For bulk mere insects, yet in mischief strong.

TATE'S JUVENAL.

FOR some hours I was inconsolable; but at length tired Nature befriended me, and I wept myself to sleep. The next morning, before I was sufficiently awake for recollection, I again, in a confused sense of pain, began my instinctive wailing. I was, however, somewhat comforted by the examination of my new jet ornaments; and the paroxysms of my grief thenceforth returned at lengthening intervals, and with abating force. Yet when I passed my mother's chamber-door, and remembered that all within was desolate, I would cast myself down at the threshold, and mix with shrieks of agony the oft-repeated cry of Mother!

mother! Or, when I was summoned to the parlour, where no one now was concerned to promote my pastimes, or remove my difficulties, or grant my requests,—on the failure of some of my little projects, I would lean my head on her now vacant seat, and vent a quieter sorrow, till reproof swelled it into loud lamentation.

These passing storms my father found to be very hostile to the calm which he had promised himself in a fortnight of decent seclusion from the cares of the counting-house. Besides, I became, in other respects, daily more troublesome. The only influence which could bend my stubborn will being now removed, he was hourly harassed with complaints of my refractory conduct. It was constantly "Sir, Miss Ellen wont go to bed,"—"Sir, Miss Ellen wont get up,"—"Sir, Miss Ellen wont have her hair combed,"—"Sir, Miss Ellen wont learn her lesson." My father having tried his authority some half-a-dozen times in vain, declared, not without reason, that the child was completely spoiled; so, by way of a summary cure for the evil, so far at

least as it affected himself, he determined to send me to a fashionable boarding-school.

In pursuance of this determination I was conveyed to —— House, then one of the most polite seminaries of the metropolis, and committed to the tuition of Madame Duprè. My father, who did not pique himself on his acquaintance with the mysteries of education, gave no instructions in regard to mine, except that expence should not be spared on it; and he certainly never found reason to complain that this injunction was neglected. For my own part, I submitted, without opposition, to the change in my situation. The prospect of obtaining companions of my own age reconciled me to quitting the paternal roof, which I had of late found a melancholy abode.

A school—it has been observed so often, that we are all tired of the observation,—a school is an epitome of the world. I am not even sure that the bad passions are not more conspicuous in the baby commonwealth, than among the "children of a larger growth;" since, in after life, experience teaches some the policy of concealing

their evil propensities; while others in a course of virtuous effort, gain strength to subdue them. Be that as it may, I was scarcely domesticated in my new abode ere I began at once to indulge and to excite the most unamiable feelings of our nature.

"What a charming companion Miss Percy will make for Lady Maria," said one of the teachers to another who was sitting near her. "Yes," returned the other in a very audible whisper, "and a lovely pair they are." The first speaker, directing to me a disapproving look, lowered her voice, and answered something of which only the words "not to be compared" reached my ear. The second, with seeming astonishment at the sentiments of her opponent, and a glance of complacency to me, permitted me to hear that the words "animation," "sensibility," "intelligence," formed part of her reply. The first drew up her head, giving her antagonist a disdainful smile; and the emphatical parts of her speech were, "air of fashion," "delicacy," "mien of noble birth," &c. &c. A comparison

was next instituted aloud between the respective ages of Lady Maria and myself; and at this point of the controversy the said Lady Maria happened to enter the room.

I must confess that I had reason to be flattered by any personal comparison between myself and my little rival, who was indeed one of the loveliest children in the world. So dazzling was the fairness of her complexion, so luxuriant her flaxen hair, so bright her large blue eyes, that, in my approbation of her beauty, I forgot to draw from the late conversation an obvious inference in favour of my own. But I was not long permitted to retain this desirable abstraction from self. "Here is a young companion for you Lady Maria," said the teacher,—"Come and I will introduce you to each other."

Her little ladyship, eyeing me askance, answered, "I can't come now—the dressmaker is waiting to fit on my frock."

"Come hither at once when you are desired, young lady," said my champion, in no conciliating tone; and Lady Maria, pouting her pretty under lip, obeyed.

The teacher, who seemed to take pleasure in thwarting her impatience to be gone, detained her after the introduction, till it should be ascertained which of us was eldest, and then till we should measure which was tallest. Lady Maria, who had confessed herself to be two years older than I was, reddened with mortification when my champion triumphantly declared me to have the advantage in stature. It was not till the little lady seemed thoroughly out of humour that she was permitted to retire; and I saw her no more till we met in school, where the same lesson was prescribed to both. Desirous that the first impression of my abilities should be favourable, I was diligent in performing my task. Perhaps some remains of ill-humour made Lady Maria neglect hers. Of consequence, I was commended, Lady Maria reproved. Had the reproof and the commendation extended only to our respective degrees of diligence, the equitable sentence would neither have inflamed the conceit of the one nor the jealousy of the other; but my former champion, whose business it was to ex-

amine our proficiency, incautiously turned the spirit of competition into a channel not only unprofitable but mischievous, by making our different success the test of our abilities, not of our industry; and while I cast a triumphant glance upon my fair competitor, I saw her eyes fill with tears not quite "such as angels shed."

At length we were all dismissed to our pastimes; and "every one strolled off his own glad way;" every one but I; who finding myself, for the first time in my life, of consequence to nobody, and restrained partly by pride, partly by bashfulness, from making advances to my new associates, sat down alone, looking wistfully from one merry party to another. My attention was arrested by a group more quiet than the rest; where, however, my new rival seemed to play the orator, speaking very earnestly to two of her companions, and laying one hand on the shoulder of each, as if to enforce attention. Her ladyship spoke in whispers, for good manners are not hereditary; casting, at intervals, such glances

towards me as shewed that I was the subject of remarks not over laudatory.

Presently the groupe began to move; and Lady Maria, leading it, as if by accident, to the place where I sat, accosted me with an air of restrained haughtiness. "Pray Miss Percy," said she, "are you of the Duke of Northumberland's family?" "No," answered I. "What Percys then do you belong to?"—"I belong to my father, Mr Percy, the great West India merchant in Bloomsbury square," returned I, not doubting that my consequence would be raised by this information. To my great surprise, however, Lady Maria's ideas of my importance did not seem affected by this intelligence; for she said in a familiar tone, "But who was your grandfather my dear? I suppose you had a grandfather!"—and she looked round for applause at this sally.

Now it happened that I was then wholly ignorant of the dignity which may be derived from this relative, having never heard whether I had a grandfather or not; but I plainly perceived that the question

was not graciously meant; and therefore I answered, with mixed simplicity and ill-humour, "Oh! I am not a fool,—I know I must have had a grandfather; but I think he could not be a duke, for I have heard papa say he had just five shillings to begin the world with!"

"So for ought you can tell," said Lady Maria, shrugging her shoulders and tittering, "your father may be the son of a blacksmith or a cobbler!"

"No, no," interrupted one of her ladyship's abettors, "don't you hear Miss Percy say that he owed his being to a crown!"

This piece of boarding-school wit seemed to delight Lady Maria, who, looking me full in the face, burst into a most vociferous fit of laughter; an impertinence which I resented with more spirit than elegance, by giving her ladyship a hearty box on the ear. A moment of dead silence ensued; the bye-standers looking at each in consternation, while my pretty antagonist collected her breath for screams of pain and rage.

The superior powers were speedily as-

sembled on the field of conflict; and the grounds of quarrel were investigated. The incivility of mine adversaries was reproved; but my more heinous outrage was judged worthy of imprisonment. In consequence of my being a stranger, it was proposed that this punishment should be remitted, upon condition of my apologizing to Lady Maria, and promising future good behaviour. With these conditions, however, I positively refused to comply; declaring that, if they were necessary to my release, I would remain in confinement till my father removed me from school. In vain did the teachers entreat, and Madame Duprè command. I insisted with sobs of indignation, that Lady Maria was justly punished for her impertinence; and stoutly asserted my right to defend myself from aggression. The maintenance of order required that I should be subdued; and, finding me altogether inflexible in regard to the terms of capitulation, the governess, in spite of the wildest transports of my rage, committed me to close custody.

Left to itself, my fury, by degrees, sub-

sided into sullen resolution. Conceiving that I had been unjustly treated, I determined not to yield. This humour lasted till the second day of my captivity, when I began to entertain some thoughts of a compromise with my dignity. Yet, when the original terms were again proposed to me without abatement, pride forbade me to accept what I had so often refused; and I remained another day in durance. At last, when I was heartily wearied of solitude and inaction, I received a visit from my champion; and though I had stubbornly withstood higher authority, I was moved by remembrance of the favour she had shewn me, to consent, that, provided Lady Maria would humble herself before me for her impertinence, I would apologize for the blow which I had given. It was now her ladyship's turn to be obstinate. She refused to comply; so after another day's confinement I was liberated unconditionally, as having sufficiently expiated my fault.

From that time an ill-humour prevailed between Lady Maria and myself, which was kept alive by mutual indications of in-

solence and ill-will. It had too little dignity to bear the name of hatred; and might rather be characterized as a kind of snappishness, watchful to give and to take offence. Our companions, enlisted in our quarrels. By degrees almost every girl in the school had been drawn to engage on one side or other; and our mutual bickerings were often carried on with as much rancour as ever envenomed the contests of Whig and Tory.

Of all my adherents, the last to declare in my favour, the most steady when fixed, was Miss Juliet Arnold, the daughter of an insurance-broker lately deceased. Mr Arnold, finding it impossible to derive from himself or his ancestors sufficient consequence to satisfy his desires, was obliged to draw for importance upon posterity, by becoming the founder of a family; therefore, leaving his daughter almost in a state of dependence, he bequeathed the bulk of a considerable fortune to his son. This young gentleman calculated that the most frugal way of providing for his sister would be to aid her in obtaining an establishment. Miss

Juliet Arnold, therefore, was educated to be married.

Let no simple reader, trained by an antiquated grandmother in the country, imagine my meaning to be that Miss Arnold was practised in the domestic, the economical, the submissive virtues; that she was skilled in excusing frailty, enlivening solitude, or scattering sunshine upon the passing clouds of life!—I only mean that Miss Arnold was taught accomplishments which were deemed likely to attract notice and admiration; that she knew what to withdraw from the view, and what to prepare for exhibition; that she was properly instructed in the value of settlements; and duly convinced of the degradation and misery of failure in the grand purpose of a lady's existence. For the rest, nature had done much to qualify Juliet for her profession; for she had a pliant temper, and an easy address; she could look undesigning, and flatter fearlessly; her manners were caressing, her passions cool, and her person was generally agreeable, without being handsome enough to awaken the caution of the

one sex or the envy of the other. Even when a child, she had an instinctive preference for companions superior to herself in rank and fortune; and though she was far from being a general favourite, was sure to make herself acceptable where she chose to conciliate.

Miss Arnold balanced long between my party and that of Lady Maria de Burgh. She affected to be equally well inclined to both, and even assumed the character of mediatrix. An invitation from Lady Maria to spend the holidays at the seat of her father the Duke of C———, entirely alienated Miss Arnold from my interests for a time; but just as she had finished her preparations for the important journey, the fickle dame of quality transferred her choice of a travelling companion to a young lady of her own rank, whose holiday festivities she was desirous of sharing in her turn.

From this time, Miss Arnold was my firm ally. She praised me much, defended me pertinaciously, and, right or wrong, embraced my opinions. Of course, she convinced me of her ardent affection for me;

and I, accustomed almost from my birth to love with my whole heart, seized the first object that promised to fill the place which was now vacant there. Miss Arnold and I, therefore, became inseparable. We espoused each other's quarrels, abetted each other's frolics, assisted each other's plots, and excused each other's misdemeanours. I smuggled forbidden novels into school for her; and she introduced contraband sweetmeats for me. In short, to use the language often applied to such confederations, we were "great friends."

This compact was particularly advantageous to me; for having, partly from nature, partly from habitual confidence of indulgence, a tendency to blunt plain-dealing, I was altogether inadequate to the invention of the hundred sly tricks and convenient excuses which I owed to the superior genius of my confederate. Often when I would have resigned myself, like a simpleton, to merited reproof, did she, with a bold flight of imagination, interpose, and bear me through in triumph. If these efforts of invention had been made in the

cause of another, I might have been tempted to brand them with their proper title; as it was, I first learnt to pardon them because of their good nature, and then to admire them for their ingenuity.

Meanwhile our education proceeded *selon les regles.* We were taught the French and Italian languages; but, in as far as was compatible with these acquisitions, we remained in ignorance of the accurate science, or elegant literature to which they might have introduced us. We learnt to draw landscape; but, secluded from the fair originals of nature, we gained not one idea from the art, except such as were purely mechanical. Miss Arnold painted beautiful fans, and I was an adept in the manufacture of card purses and match figures. But had we been restricted to the use of such apparel as we could make, I fear we should have been reduced to even more than fashionable scantiness of attire. The advertisements from —— House protested that "the utmost attention should be paid to the morals of the pupils;" which promise was performed, by requiring, that, every Sunday

afternoon, we should repeat by rote a page of the catechism, after which we were sent "forth to meditate, at even tide," in the Park. We were instructed in the art of wearing our clothes fashionably, and arranging our decorations with grace and effect; but as for "the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit," they were in no higher estimation at ——— House than "wimples and round tires like the moon."

At the end of seven years of laborious and expensive trifling, the only accomplishment, perhaps, in which I had attained real proficiency, was music. I had naturally a clear voice, a delicate ear, and a strong sensibility to sweet sounds; but I should never have exercised the perseverance necessary to excellence, had it not been from emulation of Lady Maria de Burgh. This stimulant, of doubtful character, even when untainted with the poison of enmity, operated so offectually, that I at last outstripped all my competitors; and my musical powers were pronounced equal to any which the public may command for hire. This acquisition (I blush whilst I write it)

cost me the labour of seven hours a day!—full half the time which, after deducting the seasons of rest and refreshment, remained for all the duties of a rational, a social, an immortal being! Wise Providence! was it to be squandered thus, that leisure was bestowed upon a happy few!—leisure, the most precious distinction of wealth!—leisure, the privilege of Eden! for which fallen man must so often sigh and toil in vain!

Not such were the sentiments with which at sixteen I reviewed my acquirements. I considered them as not less creditable to my genius and industry, than suitable to the sphere in which I expected to move; and I earnestly longed to exhibit them in a world which my imagination peopled with admiring friends. I had, besides, an indistinct desire to challenge notice for gifts of more universal attraction. I knew that I was rich; I more than half suspected that I was handsome; and my heart throbbed to taste the pleasures and the pomps of wealth, but much more to claim the respectful homage, the boundless sway, which I imagined to be the prerogative of beauty.

In the summer of my sixteenth year, Lady Maria was removed from school to accompany the duchess her mother, on a tour to the watering-places; and the accounts with which she favoured her less fortunate companions, of her dresses, her amusements, and her beaux, stimulated my impatience for release. My father at last yielded to my importunities; and consented, that, at the beginning of the fashionable winter, I should enter a world which looked so alluring from afar; where the objects, like sparks glittering in the distant fallow, flashed with a splendour which they owed only to the position of the eye that gazed on them.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

CHAP. III.

Lamented goodness!—Yet I see
  The fond affection melting in her eye.
She bends its tearful orb on me,
  And heaves the tender sigh;
As thoughtful she the toils surveys,
That crowd in life's perplexing maze.

LANGHORNE.

My father signalized my return from school by a change in his mode of life. He had been accustomed to repair regularly every morning at ten o'clock, to the counting-house; and there, or upon 'Change, he spent the greater part of the day in a routine of business, which twenty years had seen uninterrupted, save by the death of my mother, and a weekly journey to his villa at Richmond, where he always spent Saturday and Sunday. Upon placing me at the head of his establishment, my father, not

aware of the difference between possessing leisure and enjoying it, determined to shake off, in part, the cares of business, and to exchange a life of toil for one of recreation, or rather of repose. Upon this account, and tempted by a valuable consideration, he admitted into the house a junior partner, who undertook to perform all the drudgery of superintending one of the most extensive mercantile concerns in London, while my father retained a large share of the profits.

At the Christmas holidays I quitted school, impatient to enter on the delights of womanhood. My father, whose ideas of relaxation were all associated with his villa at Richmond, determined that I should there spend the time which intervened before the commencement of the gay winter. In compliance with my request, he invited Miss Arnold, whose liberation took place at the same time with my own, to spend a few weeks with me,—an invitation which was gladly accepted.

This indulgence, however, was somewhat balanced by the presence of a very differ-

ent companion. My mother was a woman of real piety; and to her was accorded that "medicine of life," which respectable authority has assigned exclusively to persons of that character. She had a "faithful friend." This friend still survived, and in her my father sought a kind and judicious adviser for my inexperience. He pressed her to make his house her permanent abode, and to share with him in the government of my turbulent spirit, until it should be consigned to other authority. Mrs Elizabeth Mortimer therefore, though she refused to relinquish entirely the independence of a home, left her cottage for a while to the care of her only maid-servant; and rejoicing in an occasion of manifesting affection for her departed friend, and pleasing herself with the idea that one bond of sympathy yet remained between them, prepared to revive her friendship to the mother in acts of kindness to the child.

I regret to say that she was received with sentiments much less amicable. Miss Arnold and I considered her as a spy upon our actions, and a restraint upon our plea-

sures. We called her Argus and duenna; voted her a stick, a bore, a quiz, or, to sum up all reproach in one comprehensive epithet, a Methodist. Not that she really was a sectary. On the contrary, she was an affectionate and dutiful daughter of the establishment, countenancing schismatics no further, than by adopting such of their doctrines and practices as are plainly scriptural, and by testifying towards them, on all occasions, whether of opposition or conformity, a charity which evinced the divinity of its own origin. But Miss Mortimer displayed a practical conviction, that grey hairs ought to be covered with a cap; and that a neck of five-and-forty is the better for a handkerchief; she attended church regularly; was seldom seen in a public place; and, above all, was said to have the preposterous custom of condescending to join her own servants in daily prayer. Miss Arnold and I were persuaded that our duenna would attempt to import this "pernicious superstition" into her new residence, and we resolved upon a vigorous resistance of her authority.

Our spirit, however, was not put to the proof. Miss Mortimer affected no authority. She seemed indeed anxious to be useful, but afraid to be officious. She was even so sparing of direct advice, that, had she not been the most humble of human beings, I should have said that she trusted to the dignity and grace of her general sentiments, and the beautiful consistency of her example, for effecting the enormous transition from what I was to what I ought to be.

Her gentleness converted the dislike of her charge into feelings somewhat less hostile. My friend aud I could find nothing offensive in her singularities; we therefore attempted to make them amusing. We invented dismal cases of calamity, and indited piteous appeals to her charity, making her often trudge miles over the snow in search of fictitious objects of compassion; that we might laugh at the credulity which was never deaf to the cry of want, and at the principle which refused to give without inquiry. We hid her prayer-book; purloined her hoards of baby linen and

worsted-stockings; and pasted caricatures on the inside of her pew in church.

Much of the zest of these excellent jokes was destroyed by the calm temper and perverse simplicity of Miss Mortimer. If by chance she was betrayed into situations really ludicrous, nobody laughed with more hearty relish than she. Even on the more annoying of these practical jests, she smiled with good-natured contempt; never, even by the slightest glance, directing to Miss Arnold or myself the pity which she expressed for the folly of the contriver. We could never perceive that she suspected us of being her persecutors; and her simplicity, whether real or affected, compelled us to a caution and respect which we would have renounced had we been openly detected. Our jokes, however, such as they were, we carried on with no small industry and perseverance; every day producing some invention more remarkable for mischief than for wit. At last the tragical issue of one of our frolics inclined me to a suspension of hostilities; and had it not been for the superior firmness of my friend Miss Arnold,

A15.I,

I believe I should have finally laid down my arms.

We were invited one day to dine with a neighbouring gentleman, a widower; whose family of dissipated boys, and giddy girls, were the chosen associates of Miss Arnold and myself. My father was otherwise engaged, and could not go; but Miss Mortimer accepted the invitation, very little to the satisfaction of the junior members of the party, who had projected a plan for the evening, with which her presence was likely to interfere. Miss Arnold and I, therefore, exerted all our ingenuity to keep her at home. We spilt a dish of tea upon her best silk gown; we pressed her to eat pine-apple in hopes of exasperating her tooth-ach; and we related to her a horrible robbery and murder which had been committed only the night before, in the very lane through which we were to pass. These and many other contrivances proved ineffectual. As Miss Mortimer could not wear her best gown, she could go in a worse; she would not eat pine-apple; and she insisted that those who had committed the murder

only the night before, must be bloody-minded indeed if they were ready to commit another. Next I bribed the coachman to say that the barouche could not stir till it was repaired; but my father, who, on this occasion, seemed as determined as Miss Mortimer, insisting that we should go under her auspices or not go at all, settled that Miss Arnold should ride, while I drove Miss Mortimer in the curricle.

Highly displeased with this decision, I resolved that Miss Mortimer, whose forte certainly was not strength of nerve, should rue the mettle of her charioteer. With this good-natured purpose, I privately arranged that a race should be run between my steeds, and those which were mounted by Miss Arnold, and one of the fry which had already begun to swarm round the rich Miss Percy. We set off quietly enough, but we were no sooner out of sight of my father's windows, than the signal was given, and away we flew with the speed of lightning. I saw poor Miss Mortimer look aghast, though she betrayed no other sign of fear, and I had a malicious triumph in the

thoughts of compelling her to sue for quarter.

"Is it not better, my dear," said she at last, "to drive a little more deliberately? The road is narrow here, and if we were to run over some poor creature, I know you would never forgive yourself."

There was such irresistible mildness in the manner of this expostulation, that I could not disregard it; and I was checking my horses at the moment when my beau, who had fallen behind, suddenly passed me. He gave them a triumphant smack with his whip, and the high-mettled animals sprang forward with a vigour that baffled my opposition. At this moment a decent-looking woman, in standing aside to let me pass, unfortunately threw herself into the line of his course; and I felt the horror which I deserved to feel, when my companions, each bounding over her, left her lying senseless within a step of the destruction which I had lost the power to avert.

From the guilt of murder I was saved, by the fortitude of a stranger. He boldly seized the rein; and, with British strength of

arm turning the horses short round, they reared, backed, and in an instant overturned the carriage. The stranger, alarmed by this consequence of his interference, hastened to extricate Miss Mortimer and myself; while our jockies, too intent on the race to look back, were already out of sight.

Miss Mortimer looked pale as death, and trembled exceedingly; yet the moment she was at liberty she flew to the poor woman, whom the stranger raised from the ground. They chafed her temples, and administered every little remedy which they could command, while I stood gazing on her in inactive alarm. At length she opened her eyes; and so heavy a weight was lifted from my heart that I could not refrain from bursting into tears; but, unwilling to exhibit these marks of a reproving conscience, I turned proudly away.

It soon appeared that the woman was not materially hurt,—the horses, more sagacious and humane than their riders, having cleared without striking her. Her cottage was not fifty yards distant from the

spot, and Miss Mortimer, with the stranger, conducted her home; whilst I stood biting my glove, and affecting to superintend the people who were raising our overturned vehicle. The charitable pair soon returned. Neither of us being inclined to mount the curricle again, Miss Mortimer proposed that we should walk home, and send an apology to our party. But dreading that the temptation of an evening's tête à tête might draw something like a lecture even from Miss Mortimer, I determined to accomplish my visit; and she consented that we should proceed on foot, giving, at the same time, permission to her companion to attend us.

I felt a sullen disinclination to talk, and therefore had full leisure to examine the stranger, whom Miss Mortimer introduced to me by the name of Maitland, adding that he was her old acquaintance. He was a tall, erect man, of a figure more athletic than graceful. His features were tolerably regular, and his eyes the brightest I have ever seen; but he was depriv-ed of his pretensions to be called hand-

some, by a certain *bony* squareness of countenance, which we on the south side of the Tweed are accustomed to account a national deformity. 'His smile was uncommonly pleasing, either from its contrast with the ordinary cast of his countenance, or because it displayed the whitest and most regular teeth in the world; but he smiled so seldom as almost to forfeit these advantages. His accent was certainly provincial; yet I believe that, without the assistance of his name, I could not decidedly have pronounced him to be a Scotchman. His language, however, was that of a gentleman; always correct, often forcible, and sometimes elegant. But he spoke little, and his conversation borrowed neither strength nor grace from his manner, which was singularly calm, motionless, and unimpassioned.

Either from habitual reserve with strangers, or from particular disapprobation of me, he addressed himself almost entirely to Miss Mortimer, paying me no other attentions than bare civility required; and I, who had already begun to expect far other

devoirs, from every man who accosted me, rejoiced when the conclusion of our walk separated us from the presumptuous being who had dared to treat me as a secondary person.

As soon as we entered Mr Vancouver's house, my young companions surrounded me, laughing and hallooing, " Beaten, beaten,—fairly beaten!" The victors pressed forward before the rest. " Down with your five guineas, Ellen," cried Miss Arnold. " Oh! faith 'twas a hollow thing!" shouted the other. Real sorrow for my fault would have made me gentle to those of my fellow transgressors; but the shame of a proud heart had a contrary effect. " Take your five guineas," said I, throwing them my purse with great disdain, " and you had better help yourself to a little more—*that* will scarcely repay the risk of being tried for murder." My ill-humour effected an instantaneous change on the countenances of the groupe. Miss Arnold, quite crest-fallen, picked up the purse, and stood twisting it in her hand, looking very silly, while she tried to excuse herself, and

to throw all the blame upon her companion. He retorted, and their mutual recriminations were occasionally renewed during the afternoon; banishing whatever good humour had been spared by the disappointment which Miss Mortimer had undesignedly occasioned. At last, to our mutual satisfaction, the party separated; and Miss Mortimer, with her hopeful charge, returned home.

Never, during the whole day, did a syllable of reproof escape the lips of Miss Mortimer. She seemed willing to leave me to my conscience, and confident that its sentence would be just. But when, on retiring for the night, I could not help exclaiming, "Thank heaven! this day is done!"—she took my hand, and said, with a look of great kindness, "Let me dispose of one hour of your time to-morrow, dear Ellen, and I will endeavour to make it pass more agreeably." I felt no real gratitude for her forbearance, because I had argued myself, with Miss Arnold's assistance, into a conviction that Miss Mortimer had no right to interfere; but I could not with-

stand the soothing gentleness of her manner, and therefore promised that I should be at her command at any hour she pleased.

Next day, therefore, while Miss Arnold was shopping in town, I became the companion of Miss Mortimer's morning walk; but I own, I began to repent of my complaisance, when I perceived that she was conducting me to the cottage of the poor woman who had so nearly been the victim of my late frolic. "Is this," thought I, "the way that Mrs Elizabeth fulfils her promise of making the hour pass agreeably? Such a finesse might do mighty well for a methodist; but what would she have said, had I been the author of it?" It is wonderfully delightful to detect the errors of a saint. On first discovering our destination, my feelings had wavered between shame and anger; but the detection of Miss Mortimer's supposed peccadillo restored me to so much self-complacency, that I was able at least to conceal my reluctance, and entered the cottage with a pretty good grace.

The apartment was clean and comfortable. The furniture, though simple, was rather more abundant and more tasteful than is common in the abodes of labour. Two neat shelves on the wall contained a few books; and in the window stood a tambouring frame. On one side of the fire-place our old woman was busy at her spinning-wheel; on the other, in all the ease of a favourite, lay a beautiful Italian greyhound. Miss Mortimer, with the frankness of old acquaintance, accosted our hostess, who received her with respectful kindness.—While they were asking and answering questions of courtesy and good-will, the dog, who had started up on our entrance, did the honours to me. He looked up in my face, smelled my clothes, examined me again, and, wagging his tail, seemed to claim acquaintance. I, too, thought I remembered the animal, though I could not recollect where I had seen him; and I own, I was glad to relieve a certain embarrassment which the old woman's presence occasioned me, by returning his caresses with interest.

"Mrs Wells," said Miss Mortimer, when she had finished her inquiries, "I have brought Miss Percy to visit you."

In spite of my affected nonchalance, I was not a little relieved when I discovered, by the old woman's answer, that she had not recognized me as the author of her accident. "Miss Ellen!" she exclaimed, as if with surprise and pleasure. Then taking my hand with a sort of obsequious affection, she said, "Dear young lady, I should never have known you again, you are so grown! and I have never seen you since I lost my best friend," added she, shaking her head mournfully. "Poor Fido," resumed she, "he has more sagacity. He knew you again in a minute."

"Fido, Mamma's Fido!" cried I, and I stooped over the animal to hide the tears that were rushing to my eyes.

"Yes, Miss, your papa sent him here, because he said he did not like to have him killed, being that he was but a young thing, and the very last thing that worthy Mrs Percy had ever taken a liking to; and he could not keep him about the house,

because you never set eyes of him but you cried fit to break your heart. So he sent him here, where he was very welcome, as he had a good right to be, having belonged to her; for it was owing to her that I had a home to bring him to."

"How was that?" inquired I, with some eagerness; for, to this day, my heart beats warm when I hear the praises of my mother.

"Why Ma'am," returned she, "my husband was a sober industrious man, but we were unfortunate in working for great people, who never thought of our wants, because they had no wants of their own. So we became bankrupt, and that went to my husband's heart; for he had a high spirit. So he pined and pined away. I sold our little furniture, and then our clothes; and paid for all honestly, as far as it would go. But what with the doctors, and what with the funeral, my two poor little girls and I were quite destitute. I believe it was the second night after my Thomas was laid in his grave, that my youngest girl was crying for bread, and I had none to give her. I

saw, the eldest cry too; but she said it was not for hunger. So, with one thing and another, I was desperate, and told the children I would go and beg for them. The little one bid me go, for she was hungry; but Sally said I should never beg for her, and followed me to the door, holding me back, and crying bitterly. So, just then, Providence sent that good saint, Mrs Percy, by our house, and she looked so earnestly at us—for it was not in her nature to see any creature in sorrow, and pass by on the other side—I thought I could take courage to speak to her; but, when I tried it, I had not the heart; for I had never begged before. But when she saw how things were, I did not need to beg; for she had the heart of a Christian, and the hand of a princess. She put us into this house, and gave us whatever was really needful for us. I was a good worker with my needle then, though my eyes are failing me now; and she got me as much work as I could overtake. She came, besides, every forenoon herself, and taught my eldest girl to make gowns, and my youngest to tambour, so

that now they can earn their own bread, and the most part of mine. Yes, Miss Ellen," continued the woman, perceiving that she had fixed my pleased attention, "your worthy mother did more than this; she brought heavenly hopes to me when I had few hopes upon earth; she gave pious counsels to my children, and they minded them the more for coming from so great a lady; so that they are good girls, and a real comfort to my old age."

After some further conversation, Miss Mortimer put an end to our visit. I own I was somewhat struck with the contrast between the cottager's obligations to my mother and to myself; and I had a desire to place this matter on a footing less painful to my feelings, or, to speak more justly, less galling to my pride. For this reason, when we had gone a few steps from the cottage, I returned, pretending that I had forgotten my handkerchief. "Mrs Wells," said I, "I have a great desire to possess Fido,—will you make an exchange with me?" continued I, presenting my purse to her.

The good woman coloured deeply; and, drawing back with a little air of stateliness, said, " you are welcome to poor Fido, Ma'am. Indeed, as for that, your mother's child is welcome to the best I have; but I cannot think of selling the poor dumb animal. No," said she, her spirit struggling with the sob that was rising in her throat, " I shall be poorly off indeed, before I sell the least thing that ever was hers."

I own, I felt myself colour in my turn, as I awkwardly withdrew my purse; and I had not the confidence to look the woman in the face, while I said, " Give me poor Fido then for my mother's sake; and perhaps the time may come when you will allow me the pleasure of assisting you for my own."

" One of the girls, Ma'am, shall take him to the Park this evening. I know Miss Mortimer wished to have him, but you have the best right to him; and I hope you will make him be kindly treated Ma'am; he is used to kindness."

I thanked the good woman, promised attention to her favourite, and hurried away.

Fido arrived at the Park that afternoon, and soon became the most formidable rival of Miss Arnold; nor unjustly, for he was playful, fawning, and seemingly affectionate,—the very qualities to which she owed my favour.

"See my dear Ellen," said Miss Mortimer, when I rejoined her, "see how your mother's mornings were spent." Had any one but my mother furnished the subject of this apostrophe; or had my friend Miss Arnold been present to witness its application, I should certainly have turned it off, by ridiculing the absurdity of a handsome woman of fashion spending her time in teaching cottage girls mantua-making and morality. But now, tenderness stealing on my self-reproach, I only answered with a sigh, "Ah! my mother was an angel; I must not pretend to resemble her."

"My dearest child!" cried Miss Mortimer, catching my hand with more animation than she had ever shewn in speaking to me, "why this ill-timed humility? Born to such splendid advantages, why should you not aspire to make your life a practical

thanksgiving to the bestower? I acknowledge, that your own strength is not 'sufficient for these things,' but he who has called you to be perfect, will—"

"Oh! pray now, my good Miss Mortimer," interrupted I, "give over for to-day, —I am more than half melancholy already. Ten or a dozen years hence, I shall attend to all these matters."

Before my reader comment on the wisdom of this reply, let him examine, whether there be any more weight in the reasons which delay his own endeavours after Christian perfection.

Our dialogue was interrupted by the appearance of Mr Maitland, who alighted at the wicket of the cottage garden, with the intention of inquiring after the widow; but, upon hearing that she felt no bad effects from her accident, he gave his horse to his servant, and accompanied us, or rather Miss Mortimer, to the Park. A few civil inquiries were, indeed, the only notice which he deigned to bestow upon me; and, to own the truth, I was not at all more gracious to him.

At the door of Sedly Park, stood my father as usual, with one arm resting in the hollow of his back, the other supported by his gold-headed cane; and he not only discomposed this favourite attitude by offering his hand to Mr Maitland, but advanced some steps to meet him, a mark of regard which I do not recollect having seen him bestow on any other visitor. He followed up this courtsey, by pressing his guest to dine with him, and Mr Maitland was at length induced to comply; while I stood wondering what my father could mean, by expending so much civility upon a person of whom nobody had ever heard before.

I cannot pretend to have made any observations upon Mr Maitland's manners or conversation during this visit, having previously convinced myself, that neither was worth observing. After dinner, while he discoursed with my father and Miss Mortimer, I, agreeably to the polite practice of many young ladies, formed apart with Miss Arnold and the young Vancouvers, a coterie, which, if not the most entertaining, was at least the most noisy part of the com-

pany ; the sound and foam holding due proportion to the shallowness. My father made some ineffectual attempts to reduce us to order ; and Miss Mortimer endeavoured to dissolve our combination, by addressing her remarks to me ; but I, scarcely answering her, continued to talk and titter apart with my companions till it was time for our visitors to depart.

As soon as they were gone, my father strode gravely to the upper end of the room, planted himself firmly with his back to the fire, and knitting his brows, addressed me as I stood at the further window ; " Miss Percy," said he, " I do not approve of your behaviour this afternoon. I have placed you at the head of a splendid establishment, and I desire you will consider it as your duty to entertain my guests,—all my guests, Miss Percy."

A few moments of dead silence followed, and my father quitted the room.

Had this well deserved reproof been given in private, I might have acknowledged its justice, but Miss Mortimer and my friend were present to stimulate my abhorrence

of blame; and, as soon as my father disappeared, I began a surly complaint of his ill humour, wondering "whether he expected me to sit starched by the side of every tiresome old fellow he brought to his house like the wooden cuts of William and Mary."

Miss Arnold joined me in ridiculing the absurdity of such an expectation; but Miss Mortimer took part with my father. "Indeed, my dear," said she, "you must allow me to say, that Mr Percy's guests, of whatever age, have an equal right to your attentions. I particularly wish you had distributed them more impartially to-day; for I would have had you appear with advantage to Mr Maitland, whom I imagine you would not have found tiresome, and who is certainly not very old."

"Appear with advantage to Mr Maitland!" exclaimed I,—"Oh! now, the murder is out. My father and Miss Mortimer want me to make a conquest of Stiffy."

Miss Arnold laughed immoderately at the idea. "You make a conquest of Mr Maitland!" repeated Miss Mortimer in her turn, gazing in my face with grave simpli-

city; "No, my dear, that, indeed, surpasses my expectation. Mr Maitland!" exclaimed she again, in a sort of smiling soliloquy over her knitting,—"No, that would indeed be too absurd."

I own my pride was piqued by this opinion of Miss Mortimer's; and I felt some inclination to convince her, that there was no such violent absurdity in expecting that a stiff old bachelor should be caught by a handsome heiress of seventeen. I half determined to institute a flirtation.

The idea was too amusing to be abandoned, and Mr Maitland soon gave me an opportunity of commencing my operations. He again visited Sedly Park; and, in spite of several repulses, I contrived to draw him into conversation; and even succeeded in obtaining my full share of his attention. But when he rose to be gone, I recollected with surprise, that I had spent half an hour without talking much nonsense, or hearing any. Our second interview was not more effective. At the end of the third, I renounced my attack, as utterly hopeless; and should as soon have thought of shaping a dangler out

of Cincinnatus. Mr Maitland's heart, too, seemed as impregnable as his dignity; and I was glad to forget that I had ever formed so desperate a project, as an attempt upon either.

Our acquaintance, however, continued to make some progress; and if at any luckless hour I happened to be deserted by more animating companions, I could pass the time very tolerably with Mr Maitland. I believe he was a scholar, and to this perhaps he owed that force and variety of language which was often amusing, independently of the sentiment which it conveyed. He possessed besides, a certain dry sententious humour, of which the effect was heightened by the inflexible gravity of his countenance, and by the low tones of a voice altogether unambitious of emphasis. His stiffness, which was too gentle for hauteur, and too self-possessed for bashfulness, was a constitutional, or rather perhaps, a national reserve; which made some amends for its repulsive effect upon strangers, by gratifying the vanity of those who were able to overcome it. I own, that I was selfish

enough to be flattered by the distinction which he appeared to make between Miss Arnold and myself; the more so, because there was, I know not what, in Mr Maitland, which impressed me with the idea of a sturdy rectitude that bowed to no extrinsic advantage. This gratification, however, was balanced by the preference which he constantly shewed for Miss Mortimer; and such was my craving for adulation, that I was at times absolutely nettled by this preference, although Mr Maitland was some years above thirty.

Towards the end of our stay at Sedly Park, his visits became more frequent; but in spite of his company, and that of many other gentlemen more agreeable to me, I was dying with impatience for our removal to town. My eagerness increased, when I accidentally heard, that Lady Maria de Burgh had already started as the reigning beauty of the winter. When this intelligence was conveyed to me, I was standing opposite to a large mirror. I glanced towards it, recalled with some contempt the miniature charms of my fairy competitor,

and sprung away to intreat that my father would immediately remove to town. But my father had already fixed the fourteenth of January for his removal; and Miss Arnold alleged, that nothing short of a fire would have hastened his departure, or reduced him to the degradation of acquainting the family, that he had changed his mind.

The fourteenth of January, however, at length arrived, and I was permitted to enter the scene of my imaginary triumphs.

CHAP. IV.

Next in the daunce followit invy,
Fild full of feid and fellony,
Hid malice and dispyte.
For pryvie haterit that traitour trymlit;
Him followit mony freik dissymlit,
With fenyeit wordes quhyte;
And flattereris into menis facis,
And back-bytaris in secreit placis,
To ley that had delyte;
With rownaris of fals lesingis;
Allace! that courtis of noble kingis,
Of thame can nevir be quyte.

DUNBAR. (Daunce.)

THE Countess of ——'s' ball was fixed upon as the occasion of my first appearance. What meditation did it not cost me, to decide upon the style of my costume for that eventful evening! How did my preference fluctuate between the gorgeous and the simple, the airy and the magnificent!

The balance was cast in favour of the latter, by the possession of my mother's jewels; which my father ordered to be re-set for me, with superb additions. "He could afford it," he said, "as well as Lady —— or any of her company, and he saw no reason why I should not be as fine as the proudest of them." My heart bounded with delight, when I at last saw the brilliants flash in my dark hair, mark the contour of my neck, and circle a waist slender as the form of a sylph. All that flattery had told, and vanity believed, seemed now to gain confirmation; yet, still some doubts allayed my self-conceit, till it received its consummation from the cold, the stately Mr Maitland. I overheard Miss Arnold whisper to him, as I entered the drawing-room where he and a large party were waiting to escort me, "look what lovely diamonds Mr Percy has given Ellen." "They would have been better bestowed elsewhere," returned Mr Maitland; "nobody that looks at Miss Percy will observe them."

Though certain that this compliment was

not meant for my ear, I had the hardihood to acknowledge it, by saying, "Thank you, Sir; I shall put that into my memorandum-book, and preserve it like a Queen Anne's farthing, not much worth in itself, but precious, because she never made but one."

"The farthing was never meant for circulation," returned he dryly; "but it unluckily fell into the hands of a child, who could not keep it to herself."

The word "child" was particularly offensive on this first night of my womanhood; and, in the intoxication of my spirits, I should have made some very impertinent rejoinder, if I had not been prevented by Miss Mortimer. "What, Ellen!" said she, "Quarrelling with Mr Maitland for compliments! Is it not enough to satisfy you, that he who is so seldom seen in places of that sort accompanies you to the ball to-night?"

"Oh! pray," returned I, "since Mr Maitland has so few *bienseances* to spare, allow him to dispose of them as he pleases.

His attendance to-night is meant as a compliment to my father."

"Do not make me pay a whole evening's comfort for what is only a farthing's worth, you know," said Maitland good-humouredly; "but leave off trying to be disagreeable and witty. Nay, do not frown now; your face will not have time to recover itself. I see the carriage is at the door."

I did not wait for a second intimation, but bounded down stairs, and I was already seated in the barouche with Miss Arnold before my deliberate beau made his appearance. I was too full of expectation to talk; and we had proceeded for some time in silence, when I was awakened from a dream of triumph by Mr Maitland's saying, and, as I thought, with a sigh, "What a pleasing woman is Miss Mortimer! That feminine simplicity and sweetness make the merest common-place delightful."

I suppose it was my vanity grasping at a monopoly of praise which made me feel myself teazed by this encomium; and I pettishly answered, "That it was a pity

Miss Mortimer did not hear this compliment, for she might keep it to herself, since she at least was no *child*."

"Within these few years," said Mr Maitland, "she was a very enchanting woman."

"Indeed!" exclaimed I, more and more out of humour at the unusual warmth of his expressions, "Miss Mortimer has no wit, and she has never been pretty."

"True," returned Mr Maitland, "but I dislike wits. I am not even fond of beauties. It is in bad taste for a woman to 'flash on the startled eye.' Miss Mortimer did not burst on us like a meteor,—she stole on us like the dawn, cheering and delightful, not dazzling."

This speech seemed so manifest an attack upon me, who dealt in a certain fearless repartee that passed for wit, and who was already a beauty by profession, that my eyes filled with tears of mortification. Of what use is beauty, thought I, if it be thus despised by men of sense, and draw the gaze only of silly boys? Yet men of sense have felt its power; and when people

have, like Mr Maitland, outlived human feelings, they should leave the world, and not stay to damp the pleasures of the young and the happy.

The next moment, however, sparkling eyes and skins of alabaster recovered their full value in my estimation, when, as we pressed into Lady ——'s crowded rooms, a hundred whispers met my ear of "lovely!" "charming!" and "devilish handsome!" My buoyant spirits rose again, and I looked up to take a triumphant survey of my admirers. Yet, when I met the universal gaze which was attracted by the splendour of my dress, or the novelty of my appearance, nature for a moment stirred in me; and though I had indignantly turned from Mr Maitland, and accepted the devoirs of a more obsequious attendant, I now instinctively caught his arm, and shrunk awkwardly behind him.

I quickly, however, recovered my self-possession, and began to enjoy the gaiety of the scene. Not so my companion; who seemed miserably out of place at a ball, and whose manner appeared even more

grave and repulsive than usual. I shall never forget the solemn abstracted air with which he sat silently gazing on a chandelier; and then suddenly interrupting my conversation with half-a-dozen beaux, resumed the discussion of a plan, to which I had listened with interest a few days before, for bettering the condition of the negroes upon his plantations. But my attention was at once withdrawn from his discourse, and from the titter which it occasioned, when a sudden movement opening the circle which surrounded me, gave to my view the figure of Lady Maria de Burgh.

Never had she looked so lovely. Her Ariel-like form was flying through the dance; her blue eyes sparkling with pleasure; exercise flushing her snowy skin with the hues of life and health. I observed the graceful fall of her white drapery, the unadorned braids of her sunny hair, and distrusted the taste which had loaded me with ornament.

The dance ended; and Lady Maria was going to throw herself upon a seat, when

it was suddenly taken possession of by a young man, who withdrew my attention even from Lady Maria. The easy rudeness of this action, his dress, his manner, his whole air, announced him to be of the first fashion. He languidly extended a limb of the most perfect symmetry, viewed it attentively in every direction, drew his fingers through his elegantly dishevelled hair; then, composing himself into an attitude of rest, began to examine the company, through an eye-glass set with brilliants. Lady Maria having, with some difficulty, wedged herself into a place by his side, was beginning to address him, but he turned from her with the most fashionable yawn imaginable. Presently his eyes were directed, or rather fell upon me; and I felt myself inclined to excuse the plebeian vivacity, with which he instantly pointed me out to his fair companion, seeming to inquire who I was. Her ladyship looked, and a toss of her head seemed to indicate that her reply was not very favourable. An altercation then appeared to ensue; for the gentleman rising

offered the lady his hand, as if to lead her forward; the lady frowned, pouted, flounced, and at last, with a very cloudy aspect, rose and suffered him to conduct her towards me. Scarcely relaxing her pretty features, she addressed me with a few words of very stately recognition; introduced me to her brother, Lord Frederick de Burgh; and then turned away. Miss Arnold claimed her acquaintance by a humble curtsey. Her ladyship looking her full in the face, passed, "and gave no sign." I was instantly possessed with the spirit of patronage; and though I had before forgotten that Miss Arnold was in the room, I now gave her my arm, and all the attention which I could spare from Lord Frederick de Burgh.

For a man of fashion, Lord Frederick was tolerably amusing. He knew the name, and a little of the private history of every person in the room. He flattered with considerable industry; and it was not difficult to flatter him in return. He asked me to dance. I was engaged for the three next dances; but disappointed one of my partners that I might sit with Lord Frede-

rick. His lordship next proposed that I should waltze with him. So much native feeling yet remained in me that I shrunk from making such an exhibition, and at first positively refused; but, happening to observe that Lady Maria was watching, with an eye of jealous displeasure, her brother's attentions to me, I could not resist the temptation of provoking her, by exhibiting these attentions to the whole assembly; and therefore consented to dance the waltze.

I own that I bitterly repented this compliance when I found myself standing with Lord Frederick alone, in the midst of the circle which was instantly formed round us. I forgot even the possibility of the admiration of which I had before been so secure. My knees knocked together, and a mist swam before my eyes. But there was now no retreat, and the dance began. My feelings of disquiet, however, did not rise to their height till, towards the close of the dance, I met the eye of Mr Maitland fixed on me in stern disapprobation. I have never yet met with any person whose displeasure was so disagreeably awful as that of Mr.

Maitland. At that moment it was more than I could bear. Hastily concluding the dance, I darted through the crowd of spectators, regardless of their praise or censure; and faint and unhappy, I sunk upon a seat.

I was instantly surrounded by persons who offered me every sort of assistance and refreshment. Lord Frederick was particularly assiduous. But I owed the recovery of my spirits chiefly to the sarcastic smile with which I was eyed by Lady Maria de Burgh, whom I overheard say, with a scornful glance at the gentlemen who crowded round me, "Really the trick takes admirably!" Mr Maitland now making his way towards me, said very coldly, "Miss Percy, if you are inclined to go home, I shall attend you." I was provoked at his unconcern for an uneasiness of which he had been the chief cause; and carelessly answering that I should not go home for an hour or two, accepted Lord Frederick's arm, and sauntered round the room.

During the rest of the evening, I paid no further attention to my father's friend.

Once or twice I thought of him, and with an indistinct feeling of self-reproach; but I was occupied with the assiduities of my new admirer, and had no leisure to consider of propriety. I saw too, or fancied that I saw Lady Maria make some attempts to detach her brother from me, and I had therefore double enjoyment in detaining him by my side. Though she affected indifference, I could easily see that she continued to watch us; and as often as I perceived her eye turned towards us, I laughed, flirted, and redoubled the demonstrations of our mutual good understanding. About five in the morning the party separated; and I, more worn out by the affectation, than exhilarated by the reality of merriment, returned home. Lord Frederick attended me to my carriage; and Mr Maitland having handed in Miss Arnold, bowed without speaking, and retired.

Some very excellent and judicious persons maintain a custom of calling to mind every night the transactions of the day; but even if the habit of self-examination had at all entered into my system, this was ma-

nifestly no season for its exercise. Completely exhausted, I dropped asleep even while my poor weary maid was undressing me; and closed a day of folly, pride, and enmity, without one serious, one repentant thought.

But why do I particularize one day! my whole course of life was aptly described in a short dialogue with Mr Maitland. "Miss Percy," said he, "I hope you are not the worse for the fatigues of last night." "Not in the least Sir." "Well, then, are you any thing the better for them? Do you look back on your amusement with pleasure?" "No, I must confess, I do not. Besides, I have not leisure to look back, I am so busily looking forward to this evening's opera."

Mr Maitland, sighing from the very bottom of his heart, gave me a look which said, as intelligibly as a look could speak, "unfortunate, misguided girl!" We were alone; and I was half inclined to bid him give utterance to his sentiments, and tell me all the follies which, in his secret soul, he ascribed to me. Pride was struggling with

my respect for his opinion, when Lord Frederick de Burgh was admitted; and the voice of candour, and of common sense, was never again allowed to mingle discord with the sounds of the "harp and the viol."

I had entered the throng who were in chase of pleasure, and I was not formed for a languid pursuit. It became the employment of every day, of every hour. My mornings were spent at auctions, exhibitions, and milliners' shops; my evenings wherever fashionable folly held her court. Miss Mortimer attempted gently to stem the torrent. She endeavoured to remove my temptation to seek amusement abroad, by providing it for me at home; but I had drunk of the inebriating cup, and the temperate draught was become tasteless to me. She tried to convince my reason; but reason was in a deep sleep, and stirred no further than to repulse the hand which would have roused. She attempted to persuade me; and I, to escape the subject, told her, that when I had fulfilled the engagements which were to occupy every

moment of my time for the six succeeding weeks, I would, on some rainy Sunday, stay at home all day, and patiently swallow my whole dose of lecture at a sitting. I look back with astonishment upon her patient endurance of my impertinencies. But she saw my follies with the pity of a superior nature; aware, indeed, of the tremendous difference between her state and mine, yet remembering who it was that had "made her to differ."

Finding her own efforts fruitless, she endeavoured to obtain my father's interposition. But my father considered all human kind as divided into two classes, those who were to labour for riches, and those who were to enjoy them; and he saw no reason for restricting me in the use of any pleasure for which I could afford to pay. Besides, he secretly regarded with some contempt the confined notions of Miss Mortimer, and was not without his share of elation in the triumphs which I won. He delighted to read, in the Morning-Chronicle, that at Lady G——'s ball, the brilliancy of Miss Percy's jewels had never been surpassed, save by

the eyes of the lovely wearer. He chuckled over the paragraph which announced my approaching nuptials with the young Duke of ———, although he, at the same time, declared with an oath, that "he would take care how he gave his daughter and his money to a fellow who might be ashamed of his father-in-law." Indeed he took great pleasure in bringing my suitors, especially those of noble birth, to the point of explicit proposal, and then overwhelming them with a tremendous preponderance of settlement. He rejected, in this way, some unexceptionable offers; for my splendid prospects outweighed all my folly and extravagance. I left these matters entirely to his arrangement, for I had neither wish nor love that did not centre in amusement. I sometimes wondered, however, what were his intentions in regard to me, and more than half suspected that they pointed towards Mr Maitland; but I never recollected Mr Maitland's manner towards me, without laughing at the absurdity of such a scheme.

In the meantime, along with a few sober suitors, I attracted danglers innumerable;

for I was the fashion; admired by fashionable men; envied by fashionable women; and of course, raved of by their humbler mimics of both sexes. Each had his passing hour of influence, but the lord of the ascendant was Lord Frederick de Burgh. He was handsome, showy, extravagant, and even more the fashion than myself. He danced well, drove four-in-hand, and was a very Œdipus in expounding anagrams and conundrums. Yet it was not to these advantages alone that he owed my preference. These might have won for him the smiles which he shared with fifty others; but he was indebted for my peculiar grace to his relationship with Lady Maria.

The mutual dislike of this lady and myself had been confirmed by seven years interchange of impertinences; nor was it in the least degree mitigated by the new circumstances in which we were placed. The leader of fashion, for the winter, was nearly related to the De Burgh family, and she had perhaps a stronger connection with me —she owed my father L. 12,000. Thus she naturally became the chaperon, both

to Lady Maria and myself; and we often met in circles where a person of my rank is usually considered as an intruder. Lady Maria, proud of an ancient family, resented this intrusion, the more, perhaps, because I trespassed upon rights, still dearer than the privileges of rank. I, too proud myself to tolerate pride in another, lost no opportunity of retort; and my ingenuity in discovering these occasions was probably heightened by the necessity of improving them with due regard to the rules of politeness. Our mutual acquaintance, accustomed to witness genteel indications of hatred, soon learnt to please, by gentle sarcasms against an absent rival; and we were never without some good-natured friend who could hint to each whatever debt she owed to the malice of the other. I know not how Lady Maria might feel; but I was alternately pleased with these sacrifices to my malevolence, and mortified by perceiving, that it was visible to every common observer. I attempted to conceal what I was ashamed to avow; but the arrogance and irascibility, still more than the natural open-

ness of my temper, unfitted me for caution; and between the fear of exposing my rancour, and my eagerness to give it vent,—between my quick sensibility to civil scorn, and my impatience to repay it in kind, I endured more pain than it would have cost me to banish from my breast every vindictive thought.

How does one disorderly passion place us at the mercy of every creature who will use it as a tool to serve his purpose? Even my maid endeavoured to make her peace after the destruction of a favourite cap, by telling me that she had quitted Lady Maria's service for mine, because she had no pleasure in dressing her last lady, who, she said, "was little bigger than a doll, and not much wiser." Miss Arnold, who, in spite of her obsequious endeavours to please, had one day the misfortune to offend her capricious patroness, was restored to immediate favour, by informing me, that "the whole town believed Lady Maria's pretended cold to be nothing but a fit of vexation, because her father had permitted Lord Frederick to pay his addresses to me."

In spite of the belief of the "whole town," however, Lord Frederick was still nothing more than a dangler; nor had I the slightest desire to attract his more particular regards. I was even afraid that he should, by a serious proposal, oblige me to dispense with his future attentions, and thereby deprive me of the amusement of witnessing the frowns and tosses, and fidgetings, with which Lady Maria watched a flirtation always redoubled when she was near.

This amusement, indeed, was obtained at the expence of incurring some animadversion. My competitors for fashion, and of course for the notice of fashionable men, revenged themselves for my superior success by sarcastic comments upon my supposed conquest; each obliquely insinuating, that she might have transferred it to herself, if she could have descended to such means as I employed. These inuendos, however, were softened ere they reached my ear, into gentle raillery,—friendly questions, as to the time when I was to bless Lord Frederick with my hand,—and tender-hearted expostulations on the cruelty of de-

lay. Miss G—— would speak to me in the most compassionate terms, of the envy which my conquest excited in her poor friend Miss L——; and Miss L——, in her turn, would implore me to marry Lord Frederick, were it only to put poor Miss G—— out of suspense. That which should have alarmed my caution, only flattered my vanity. Instead of discountenancing the attacks of my acquaintance by calm and steady opposition, I invited them by feeble defence; or at best, parried them with a playfulness which authorized their repetition.

CHAP. V.

Here eloquence herself might plead in vain,
Nor one of all the heartless crowd could gain.
And thou! O sweeter than the muse's song,
Affection's voice divine! with cold disdain,
Even thou art heard; while mid th' insulting throng
Thy daunted shivering form moves timidly along.

MRS TIGHE.

MARRIAGE is like sin; if we often allow it to be presented to our view, we learn to look without starting. I was supremely indifferent towards Lord Frederick, and never entertained one serious thought of becoming his wife; but I suffered myself to be rallied upon our future connection, till the idea excited no distinct sentiment of disapprobation; and till by degrees I forgot to make up for the faintness of my denials, by the strength of my inward resolutions against the match. Perhaps I should de-

scribe my case more correctly, were I to own that I formed no plan for the future; all my serious consideration being reserved for the comparative merits of satin and velvet, or of an assembly and an opera. The reputation of Lord Frederick's attentions gave me much more pleasure than the attentions themselves; and my companions knew how to flatter me, by reminding me of his assiduities.

Of all my remembrancers, the most persevering, if not the most vehement, was Miss Arnold. She had made her calculations on the increased importance which rank might give her patroness; and, with her accustomed shrewdness, chose the means most effectual for promoting her object. She did not, indeed, like others of my acquaintance, rally me upon marriage; on the contrary, she rather affected some delicacy upon that subject; but, in Lord Frederick's absence, she made him her constant theme; and the moment he approached, she resigned to him her place by my side. As she had intimate access to my mind, she knew how to accommodate her attacks to

my prevailing sentiments. At first, she confined herself to chronicling the symptoms of Lady Maria's jealousy and spite; amusing me with pictures, half-mimic half-descriptive, of the ill-concealed malice of my foe, and instigating me to further irritation. Next, she began to mingle her register with hints of having observed, that the sport was becoming a serious one to Lord Frederick. I was at first little inclined to credit a circumstance which would have added to the impropriety of my favourite amusement; but when at last Miss Arnold's instances, and my own exuberant vanity, convinced me of the fact, some remains of justice and humanity prompted me to a change of conduct.

"If Lord Frederick has really taken it into his wise head to be in love with me," said I to her one day when we were alone, "I believe, Juliet, I ought to carry the jest no farther."

I spoke with great gravity, for I was half afraid that she must be of my opinion. She looked steadily in my face, as if to see whether I were in earnest; and then burst

into a hearty fit of laughter.—"Ridiculous!" cried she; "What! you expect him to die of it,—do you? Really my dear, I did not think you had been so romantic."

I believe I blushed, for appearing to overrate a passion which my companion considered as so frivolous; and answered carelessly, "Oh! I dare say he'll survive it; but one would not wilfully give uneasiness, however trivial, you know."

"Bagatelle! you, who make a hundred hearts ache every day, to trouble your conscience about one stray thing! Besides, I'll answer for it, that the affair upon the whole will give him more pleasure than pain. How many sighs, such as lordlings breathe, would it require to repay Lord Frederick for that air of yours, as you turned to him last night from young Lord Glendower!"

"Ah! but that pleasure was a free gift, Juliet. I have no right to make him pay for it; besides, Glendower is such a fool, that it was really a relief to get rid of him. But, to be serious, I believe I shall effect my retreat with the better grace, the sooner I begin it.

Miss Arnold was silent for a few moments, apparently pondering the matter; then, with an air of mature reflection, said, "Well! perhaps, upon the whole, you may be right. Your indifference will probably cure Lord Frederick; besides, it will be a double charity,—it will be such a relief to Lady Maria, poor girl! I confess, Ellen, I am often sorry for her. Did you observe what a passion she was in last night when Lord Frederick would not quit you to dance with Lady Augusta Loftus."

"It was provoking to see one's brother shew so little taste," answered I, pulling myself up, and trying to suppress a simper. "I should have thought I had no chance with Lady Augusta."

"Not, indeed," returned Miss Arnold, with a contemptuous smile, "if every one judged like Lady Maria de Burgh; and estimated a woman, like a carrot, by the length of root she had under ground! Oh! what a passion she will be in when Lord Frederick makes his proposals, and is refused!"

"But if I go much further, Juliet, how can I refuse him? I can't tell the man that

I have been drawing him on merely for the purpose of teasing his sister.

"Well," returned Miss Arnold, "after all, I believe you are right; so just do as you please. Your father, to be sure, might easily manage that matter,—but do as you please."

She knew that she might safely entrust me with this permission; secure that, even if my resolutions were good, they would be ineffective. To shake off the attentions of a man who has once been encouraged, requires more firmness than usually falls to the lot of woman. Besides, Lord Frederick had habit in his favour; and with those who are neither guided by reason nor principle, habit is omnipotent. Pride, too, refused to resign the only means of repaying Lady Maria's scorn; and, in spite of the momentary checks of conscience, the flirtation proceeded just as before.

While my soi-disant friend encouraged my follies, no Mentor was at hand to repress them. My father, mingling little in the circles which I frequented, was ignorant of the encouragement which I gave to Lord

Frederick. Miss Mortimer, ill calculated to arrest the notice of the gay and the giddy, was almost excluded from the endless invitations which were addressed to me. The public amusements, which consumed so much of my time, were unsuitable to her habits, to her principles, and to the delicacy of her health. Thus she was seldom the witness of my indiscretions. There is, indeed, no want of people who serve all scandalous tales as the monasteries were wont to do poor strangers, dress them out a little, and help them on their way. But these charitable persons care not to consign a calumny to those who will neither welcome nor advance it; and Miss Mortimer's declared aversion to scandal kept her ignorant of some of the real, and much of the fabulous history of her acquaintance. Accordingly, my intimacy with Lord Frederick had, for almost three months, excited the smiles, the envy, or the censure of "everybody one knows," when Miss Mortimer was surprised into hearing a copious account of my imprudence from a lady who declared "that she was quite

concerned to see that lovely girl, Miss Percy, give so much occasion for censorious tales!" Who could doubt the kindness of that concern which led her to detail my errors to my friend, while she délicately forbore from hinting them to myself! My entrance happening to interrupt her narrative, I heard her say, with great emphasis, " So very ridiculous, that I thought it an act of friendship ——" But, seeing me, she stopped; frowned very significantly at Miss Mortimer; and then, resuming her complacency of countenance, she accosted me in the most affectionate manner, protesting that she rejoiced in being so fortunate as to meet with me. " I was just telling Miss Mortimer," said she, " that I never saw you look so lovely as when you were delighting us all with that divine concerto upon the harp last night." In the same stile she ran on for about three minutes; then declaring, that she always forgot how time went when she was visiting us, she hurried away; first however, repeating her frown to Miss

Mortimer, accompanied with a cautioning shake of the head.

I turned towards my real friend, and observed that she was looking on me through rising tears. We were alone, and I think I was always less indocile, less unamiable, when there were few witnesses of my behaviour. Touched with the affectionate concern that was painted in her face, before I knew what I was doing, I had locked her hand in mine, and had inquired "what was the matter with my good friend?"

"My dearest Ellen," returned she, and her mild eyes filled again, "would you but allow me to be your friend! But I will not talk to you now. That prating woman has discomposed me."

My conscience at that moment giving warning of a lecture in embryo, I instantly recollected myself. "Oh!" cried I, "how can you mind what she says? She is so prodigal of her talk, that her own stores are nothing to her. She must depend upon the public for supply and you know what the proverb says of 'begging.

and choosing.' But I must be gone, I promised to meet Lady Waller at the exhibition. Good bye."

My reader, especially if he be a male reader, will more easily conceive than I can express, the abhorrence of rebuke which, at this period of my life, was strong upon me. I believe I could with more patience have endured a fit of cramp, than the most gentle reproof that ever friendship administered. By Miss Arnold's help, I for some days escaped the admonitions of Miss Mortimer, till I was unfortunately placed at her mercy, by an indisposition which I caught in striving, for two hours, to make my way through the Duchess of ———'s lobby on the night of a rout. The first day of my illness, Miss Arnold was pretty constantly at my bed-side. The second, she was obliged to dine abroad, and could not return before two o'clock in the morning. The third, while she was gone to the auction to buy some toy which I had intended purchasing, I received permission to leave my chamber; and Miss Mortimer, who

had scarcely quitted me by day or night, attended me to my dressing-room.

From mere habit, I approached my glass; but three days of illness had destroyed its power to please. "Bless me," cried I, "what shall I do? I am not fit to be seen! And I am dying to see somebody or other. Do Grant, tell them to let in Mr Maitland, if he calls. It is ten to one that he will not observe what a haggard wretch I look."

"I have heard," said Miss Mortimer, "that love-lorn damsels sigh for solitude. I hope your inclination for company is a sign that your heart is still safe, in spite of reports to the contrary." She forced a smile, yet looked in my face with such sad earnestness, as if she had wished, but feared to read my soul.

There is no escape now, thought I, so I must make the best of it "Quite safe," answered I; "so safe that I scarcely know whether I have one. I rather imagine, that in me, as in certain heroines whom I have read of at school, a deficiency has been made on one side, on purpose that I might

wound with the greater dexterity and success."

"I rejoice to hear you say so," returned Miss Mortimer, "and still more to see by that candid countenance, that you are not deceiving yourself. I knew that you were above deceiving me."

"Nay," said I, "I won't answer for that, if I had any thing serious to conceal; but there is no cause for deceit. I would not give my dear Fido here for all other animals of his sex upon earth, except my father and ——."

"And whom?" asked Miss Mortimer.

"I was going to say Mr Maitland," answered I, "because he is so good a man; but Fido is a hundred times more affectionate and amusing."

Miss Mortimer now smiled without trying it. "Mr Maitland is indeed a good man," said she; and if you would shew him half the kindness and attention that you do to Fido,——."

She, too, left the sentence unfinished. Now, though I had not, I believe, a thought of finding a lover in Mr Mait-

land, I often recollected, not without pique, Miss Mortimer's first decision on that subject; and, with a vague idea that she was going to recant, I said, with some quickness, "Well, what would happen if I did?"

"You would find him quite as amusing," answered she.

"Is that all!" said I poutingly; "then I may as well amuse myself with Lord Frederick, who does not give me the trouble of drawing him out."

In my momentary pet I had started the very subject which I wished to avoid. Miss Mortimer instantly took advantage of my inadvertence. "A little more caution," said she gravely, "may be necessary in the one case than in the other; for Mr Maitland, far from wilfully misleading you, would guard the delicacy of your good name with a father's jealousy."

"In what respect does Lord Frederick mislead me?"

"Nay, I will not assert that he does; but my dear Ellen, our grandmothers used to warn us against the arts of men. They

represented lovers as insidious spoilers, subtle to contrive, and forward to seize every occasion of advantage. I fear the nature of the pursuer remains the same, though the pursuit be transferred from our persons to our fortunes."

"Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire!" exclaimed I, "what a train you have conjured up! But I can assure you Lord Frederick is no insidious spoiler, nor subtle, nor very bold; but a good-natured, giddy-brained fellow, no more a match for me in cunning than I am for him at the small-sword."

"Take care Ellen. We all overrate ourselves where we are deficient. No part of your character is more striking than your perfect singleness of heart."

"But what need is there of so much caution. I may as well marry Lord Frederick as any body else. He wants fortune, I want rank. The bargain would be very equitable. What objection could there be to it?"

"None," replied Miss Mortimer, with a deep sigh, "provided that your father were

satisfied; and, which is, if possible, of still more importance, provided you are sure that Lord Frederick is the man whom your sober judgment would approve."

"What! would you have me marry on mere sober judgment?"

"No, I would not go quite so far; but at least, I would not have you marry against your sober judgment. Much, very much will depend upon the character of your husband. Toys cannot always please you, Ellen, for you have warm affections. These affections may meet with neglect, perhaps with unkindness; and have your habits fitted you for patient endurance? You have strong feelings; and have you learnt the blessed art of weakening their power upon your own mind, by diverting them into less selfish channels?"

She spoke with such warmth as flushed her cheek with almost youthful bloom; while I smiled at the solemnity with which she treated a subject so far from serious; and inwardly pitied that ignorance of the world, which could so much mistake the nature of a harmless flirtation. "Oh!"

cried I, "if I were to marry Lord Frederick, I should support his neglect with great philosophy; and as for unkindness, we could provide against that in the settlements."

Miss Mortimer's manner grew still more solemn. "Answer me as gaily as you will," said she, "but, by all that you value, my dearest child, I adjure you to be serious with yourself. You have told me that you mean one day to change your plan of life,—to put away childish things,—to begin your education for eternity. Is Lord Frederick well fitted to be your companion,—your assistant in this mighty work!"

This view of the subject was far too awful for sport, far too just for raillery, and far too grave for my taste; so I hastened to dismiss the theme. "Well, well, my good Miss Mortimer," said I, "be under no apprehensions, I have not the slightest intention of marrying Lord Frederick."

"If that be the case," returned she, "suffer me to ask why you encourage his attentions."

"Merely for the sake of a little amusement," answered I.

"Ah Ellen!" said Miss Mortimer, "how many young women are lured on by the same bait, till they have no honourable means of escape; and marry without even inclination to excuse their folly or mitigate its effects! Let the warning voice of experience"—

The warning voice was, at that moment, silenced by the entrance of Miss Arnold. "Here, Ellen," said she, "is a packet for you, which I found in the lobby.—What have you got there?" continued she, as I opened it.

"A note from Lord Frederick, and two tickets to Lady St Edmunds' masked ball."

"Delightful! When is it to be?"

"On Monday the fifth of May."

"Oh we have no engagement, that is charming!"

Miss Arnold skipped about, and seemed quite in extacies. Miss Mortimer, on the contrary, looked gravely intent upon her work. Her gravity, and the extravagance of Juliet's raptures, alike restrained my pleasure; and I only expressed it by saying, with tolerable composure, that of all

amusements, a masked-ball was the one which I most desired to see.

"Oh! it will be enchanting!" cried Miss Arnold, "What dresses shall we wear, Ellen?"

Miss Mortimer having cut a cap which she had been shaping, into more than fifty shreds, now leant earnestly towards me; and timid and faltering, as if she feared my answer, asked, "if I would accept of Lord Frederick's tickets?"

"To be sure she will," said Miss Arnold, answering for me.

"Why should I not?" said I.

"I hope you will at least consider the matter," returned Miss Mortimer, still addressing herself particularly to me. "This sort of amusement is regarded with suspicion by all sober-minded persons; and I own I could wish that Miss Percy thought this a sufficient reason for refusing it her countenance."

"I am sure that is a nonsensical prejudice," cried Miss Arnold. "At a subscription masquerade, indeed, one might meet with low people, but at Lady St Ed-

munds, there will be none but the best company in town."

"The best *born* company, I suppose you mean," answered Miss Mortimer; "but I imagine, that the very use of masks is to banish the privileges and the restraints of personal respectability."

"Nay now, my dear Miss Mortimer!" cried I, playfully laying my hand upon her mouth, "pray don't throw away that nice lecture; you know I never was at a masquerade in my life, and you would not be so savage as to prose me out of going to one! only one!"

"If I thought there were any chance of success," said Miss Mortimer, smiling affectionately on me, "I would make captives of these little hands till I tried all my rhetoric."

"It would be all lost," cried I, "for positively I must and will go." Miss Mortimer's countenance fell; for she knew that in spite of the sportiveness of my manner, I was inaccessible to conviction; she clearly perceived, though I was unconscious of the association, that my pride connected an idea

of rebellious presumption with whatever thwarted my inclination; and she saw that no argument was likely to find admission, where, instead of being welcomed as an honest counsellor, it was guarded against as an insolent mutineer.

After a short silence, she changed her point of attack. "If," said she, "your acceptance of Lord Frederick's tickets implies any obligation to accept his particular attendance, I think, Ellen, you will see the prudence of refusing them."

Recollecting our late conversation, I felt myself embarrassed, and knew not what to answer. But my companion quickly relieved my dilemma. "Indeed, Miss Mortimer," said she, "you know nothing of these matters. Ellen cannot invite gentlemen to Lady St Edmunds' house, so it is clear that we must allow Lord Frederick to go with us; but when we are there, we shall soon find attendants enough."

"Yes," said I, willing to satisfy Miss Mortimer, "and when we get into the rooms, we shall be under the Countess's

protection, and may shake off the gentlemen as soon as we choose."

Miss Mortimer looked more and more anxious. "What protection can Lady St Edmunds afford you," said she, "where hundreds around her have equal claims; and left in such a place without any guard but your own discretion—Dearest Ellen, I beseech you, return these tickets."

Though I was far from owning to myself that Miss Mortimer was in the right, I could not entirely suppress the consciousness that my resistance was wrong. The consequence was, that I grew angry with her for making me displeased with myself, and peevishly answered, that I would not return the tickets, nor be debarred from a harmless amusement by any body's unfounded prejudices."

"Call them prejudices, or what you will, Ellen," said Miss Mortimer, in a voice which I must have been a savage to resist, "only yield to them!"

My self-condemnation, and of course my ill-humour, were increased by her mildness; and, forgetting all her claims to my respect,

all her patient affection, all her saint-like forbearance, I turned upon her with the petulance of a spoiled child, and asked, "who gave her a right to thwart and importune me?" Tears rushed to her meek eyes. "It was your mother! Ellen," cried she; "when she bade me, in remembrance of our long and faithful friendship, to watch and advise, and restrain her child. Will you not give me up a few short hours of pleasure for her sake?"

I was overpowered and burst into tears; yet tears, I must own, as much of spleen as of tenderness. Such, as they were, I was ashamed of them; and dashing them away, snatched the tickets and inclosed them in a short note of apology to Lord Frederick. "Are you going to return them?" cried Miss Arnold, looking over my shoulder at what I had written, and speaking in a tone of the utmost surprise. "Certainly!" said I in a manner so decided, that, without the least attempt to oppose my design, she sat down opposite to me, as if taking wistfully her last look of the tickets.

"Pull the bell, Juliet," said I, somewhat triumphantly, as I sealed the note,

"Give me the note," said Miss Arnold, "I am going down stairs, and will give it to a servant. It is a pity the poor creatures should have unnecessary trouble." She took the packet, and quitted the room.

Miss Mortimer, the big drops still trickling down her cheek, pressed my hand, as if she would have thanked me, had her voice been at her command. Conscious of having made a proper sacrifice, I involuntarily recovered my good humour; but my pride refused to let my kind friend think her victory complete; and, releasing my hand, I turned away with cold stateliness.

But what am I doing! Is the world peopled with Miss Mortimers, that I should expect its forbearance for such a character as mine?—No; but I will endure the shame which I have merited. Detest me reader. I was worthy of your detestation! Throw aside, if you will, my story in disgust. Yet remember, that indignation against vice is not of itself virtue. Your abhorrence of pride and ingratitude is no farther genuine, than, as it operates against your own pride, your own ingratitude.

CHAP. VI.

Yet still thy good and amiable gifts
The sober dignity of virtue wear not.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

As soon as Miss Arnold and I were alone, she renewed the subject of the masked-ball. "Well Ellen!" cried she, "I protest, I never was so much astonished as at your simplicity in returning those tickets. That old woman really winds you about just as she pleases."

"No, I am not quite so pliant," answered I, somewhat piqued; "but after the footing upon which Miss Mortimer put her request, I do not see how I could refuse it."

"She has art enough to know where you are most accessible," said Miss Arnold,

well knowing that nothing was more likely to stir the proud spirit than a suspicion of being duped. "It is really provoking to see you so managed!" continued she; "And now to have her trick us out of this ball where we should have been so happy! You would have looked quite enchanting as a sultana! and your diamond plume would have been divine in the front of your turban, and—"

She ran on describing our dresses and characters, enlarging on the amusement of which my ill-timed facility had deprived us, till I was thoroughly indignant at Miss Mortimer's interference. "I am sure," interrupted I, "I wish I had not allowed myself to be wheedled over like a great baby; but I promise you that she sha'nt find it so easy to persuade me another time." Then I proceeded to reproach my own want of spirit; for we can all attack ourselves where we are invulnerable. "If I had not been the tamest creature in the world," said I, "I should not have yielded the matter; but it is in vain to talk of it now."

"Why in vain?" cried Miss Arnold with vivacity.

"You know," answered I, "that now when we have returned the tickets nothing more can be done."

"What if we could still have the tickets?" said Miss Arnold.

"Impossible!" said I, "I would not condescend to ask them again from Lord Frederick."

"But," said Miss Arnold, throwing her arm round my neck with an insinuating smile, "what if I, seeing that my dearest Ellen's heart was set upon this ball, and guessing that she would soon repent of her saint-errantry, had slily put the tickets into my pocket, and could produce them thus," (shewing me a corner of them,) "at this very moment?"

I was thunderstruck. In spite of eight years intimacy, Miss Arnold had miscalculated upon my sentiments, when she expected me to approve of this manœuvre. Confidence in my mother's mildness and affection had instilled into my infant mind habits of sincerity; habits which she had

strengthened less by precept than by encouragement and example. The tint had been infused at the fountain head, and it still coloured the stream. A dead silence followed Miss Arnold's discovery; she, waiting to hear my sentiments, I not caring to speak them; she looking intently in my face, I gazing stedfastly on the tickets, without recollecting that I held them in my hand.

"How could we produce them to Miss Mortimer?" said I at last, pursuing my reflections aloud. "She confidently believes that they are gone; and she will think this such a piece of"—cunning, I would have said, but I could not utter the ungracious truth to the kind creature, who had erred purely to oblige me. "She would be so astonished!" continued I, "And only this morning she praised my ingenuousness! I cannot keep these tickets."

"Oh!" cried Miss Arnold, "I am sure there is no disingenuousness on your part. It was not you who detained the tickets. I will tell her honestly how the matter stands. I would be chidden for a month

rather than that you should lose this ball,—you would be so happy, and so much admired!"

"My dear kind-hearted Juliet! you cannot suppose that I will take advantage of your good nature! You would not have me buy my pleasure at the expence of injuring you in any one's good opinion? No, no! were I to keep these tickets it should be at my own hazard."

I think Miss Arnold blushed; and she certainly hesitated a moment before she replied, "I assure you I do not care a straw for her good opinion. What signify the whims of people who think like nobody else?"

Of all my acquaintance, Mr Maitland alone joined Miss Mortimer in "thinking like nobody else;" and a recollection of him glanced across my mind. The association was not over favourable to Miss Arnold's purpose. "Some of the most sensible men in the kingdom think like Miss Mortimer," said I.

"The most sensible men in the kingdom often think wrong," returned Miss Arnold.

"Besides, what signify their thoughts, so long as they dare not tell us them?"

"Some of them do dare," said I with a sigh.

"Come, come, Ellen," said Juliet, "do you keep the tickets, and I shall willingly take the blame. Be satisfied with being afraid of the men and the methodists yourself; you will never make me so."

"Afraid!" The word jarred upon my spirit. "Afraid!" repeated I; "I fear no mortal; but I scorn to do what the coldest, most correct man in England could think dishonourable. I would not be despised for all the pleasures under heaven! I will send back these tickets this moment."

I turned proudly away, wholly unconscious how much the sense of honour was indebted to the opportune remembrance of Mr Maitland, and as confident in my own integrity as if it had already been seven times tried in the furnace. I rang the bell; delivered, with my own hand, the tickets to a servant; and never in my life felt more conscious of my advantages of stature. I forgot the languor of indisposition.

I walked with the springing step of exultation. I forgave Miss Mortimer my disappointment. I was grateful to Juliet for her kind intentions. Every object was pleasing, for it shone with the reflected light of self-approbation. My evening was cheerful, though comparatively lonely; my sleep refreshing, though unbought by exercise. I could have wished that it had been allowable to tell Miss Mortimer all my cause of triumph; and once (such is the selfishness of pride) I entertained a thought of boasting to her my second sacrifice to propriety; but, when I remembered the meanness of betraying my friend to censure, the base suggestion vanished from my mind; and again I inwardly applauded my own rectitude, instead of blushing that such a thought could have found entrance into my soul.

Almost for the first time in my life I wished for Mr Maitland's presence; probably, though I did not shape the idea to myself, in the hope that he would confirm my self-esteem. But he came not to take advantage of my order for excluding all

visitors except himself. The next day, however, he called; and as I was still somewhat indisposed, he was admitted to my *boudoir*. He had not been seated many minutes, when Miss Mortimer adverted to my late sacrifice. "You must assist me with your invention, Mr Maitland," said she. "I want to make Monday, the 5th of May, the happiest day in the season, and as gay as is consistent with happiness."

"My invention is quite at your service," said Mr Maitland; "but why is the 5th of May to be so distinguished?"

"I am deeply in Miss Percy's debt for amusement on that day; for it was fixed for a masked-ball, which she has given up at my request."

I stole a glance at Mr Maitland, and saw his countenance relax pleasantly. "I dare say," said he, "you owe Miss Percy nothing on that account, for she will have more pleasure in complying with your wish than twenty masked-balls would have given her."

"I am not sure of that," cried I, "for,

of all things on earth, I should like to see a masked-ball."

"Must I then, per force, allow you some merit for relinquishing this one?" said Mr Maitland, seating himself by my side, with such a smile of playful kindness as he sometimes bestowed on Miss Mortimer. "But why," continued he, "should you, of all women, desire to appear in masquerade? Come, confess that you believe you may conceal more charms than fall to the lot of half your sex, and still defy competition."

"You may more charitably suppose," returned I, "that I am humbly desirous to escape comparisons."

"Nay," said Mr Maitland, with a smile which banished all the severity of truth, "that would imply too sudden a reformation. Would you have me believe that you have conquered your besetting sin since the last time we met?"

"How have you the boldness," said I smiling, "to talk to me of my besetting sin?"

"As I would talk to a soldier of his

scars," said Mr Maitland. "You think it an honourable blemish."

"This is too bad!" cried I, "not only to call me vain, but to tell me that I pique myself on my vanity!"

"Ay," returned Mr Maitland dryly, "on your vanity, or your pride, or your ———, call it what you will."

"Well, pride let it be," said I. "Surely there is a becoming pride, which every woman ought to have."

"A becoming pride!" repeated Mr Maitland; "the phrase sounds well; now tell me what it means?"

"It means—it means—that is, I believe it means—that sort of dignity which keeps your saucy sex from presuming too far."

"What connection is there, think you, between cautious decency,—that peculiar endearing instinct of woman,—and inordinate self-estimation?"

"Oh! I would not have my pride inordinate. I would merely have a comfortable respect for myself and my endowments, to keep up my spirit, that I might not be a poor domestic animal to run about tame

with the chickens, and cower with them into a corner as oft as lordly man presented his majestic port before me!—No! I hope I shall never lose my spirit. What should I be without it!"

"Far be it from me to reduce you so deplorably!" said Mr Maitland; beginning with a smile, though, before he ceased to speak, the seriousness of strong interest stole over his countenance. "But what if Miss Percy, intrusted with every gift of nature and of fortune, should remember that still they were only trusts, and should fear to abuse them? What if, like a wise steward, instead of valuing herself upon the extent of her charge, she should study how to render the best account of it? What would you then be? All that your warmest friends could wish you. You would cease to covet—perhaps to receive—the adulation of fools; and gain, in exchange, the respect, the strong affection, of those who can look beyond a set of features."

The earnestness with which Mr Maitland spoke was so opposite to the cold composure of his general manner; his

eyes, which ever seemed to penetrate the soul, flashed with such added brightness, that mine fell before them, and I felt the warm crimson burn on my cheek. I believe no other man upon earth could have quelled my humour for a moment; but I had a habitual awe of Mr Maitland, and felt myself really relieved, when the entrance of my father excused me from replying.

I knew, by my father's face, that he was full of an important something; for he merely paid the customary compliment to Mr Maitland, and then walked silently up and down the room with an air of unusual stateliness and satisfaction. "What has pleased you so much this morning, Papa?" inquired I.

"Pleased, Miss Percy!" returned my father, knitting his brow, and endeavouring to look out of humour, "I tell you I am not pleased. I am teased out of my life on your account by one fellow or another." Then, turning to Maitland, he formally apologized for troubling him with family affairs, though I believe he was, on

this occasion, not at all sorry to have his friend for a hearer.

" Which of them has been teasing you now, Sir?" said I, carelessly.

" The Duke of C——," said my father in a fretful tone, though a smile was lurking at the corner of his mouth, " has been here this morning to make proposals for a match between you and his son Frederick."

" Well, Sir," said I, with some little interest in the issue of the conference; but my curiosity was instantly diverted into another channel, by a sudden and not very gentle pressure of the hand, which Mr Maitland had still held, and which he now released. The gesture, however inadvertent, attracted my eye towards him; but his face was averted, and my vanity could not extract one particle of food from the careless air with which he began to turn over the pages of a book which lay upon my work-table.

My father proceeded. " His Grace proposed to settle two thousand pounds a-year upon his son; no great matter he was forced to confess; but then he harangued

about supporting the dignity of the title, and the hardship of burdening the representative of the family with extravagant provision for younger children. But, to balance that, Ellen, he hinted that you might be a Duchess; for the Marquis, like most of these sprigs of quality, is of a very weakly constitution. Pity that ancient blood should so often lose strength in the keeping! Eh, Ellen!"

My father made a pause, and looked as if he expected that I should now express some curiosity in regard to his decision, but my pride was concerned to shew my total indifference on the subject; so I sat quietly adjusting my bracelet, without offering him the slightest encouragement to proceed. He looked towards Maitland; but Maitland was reading most intently. He turned to Miss Mortimer; and at last found a listener, who was trembling with interest which she had not power to express.

"What think you of the great man's liberality?" continued my father. "Is not two thousand pounds a-year a mighty splen-

did offer for a girl like my Ellen there, with a hundred thousand pounds down, and perhaps twice as much more before she dies? Eh, Mrs Elizabeth? Should not I be a very sensible fellow, to bring a jackanapes into my house to marry my daughter, and spend my money, and be obliged to me for the very coat on his back, and all by way of doing me a great honour forsooth? No, no. I'll never pay for having myself and my girl looked down upon. She's a pretty girl, and a clever girl, and the d——l a De Burgh in England can make his daughter as well worth an honest man's having; Eh, Maitland?"

"Not, in your opinion and mine, undoubtedly, Sir," said Maitland, with the air of a man who is obliged to pay a compliment.

"I told the old gentleman my mind very distinctly," said my father, drawing up his head, and advancing his chest. "I have given his grandee pride something to digest, I warrant you. And now he is ashamed of his repulse, and wants the whole affair kept private forsooth. I am sure it

is none of my concern to trumpet the matter. All the world knows I have refused better offers for Miss Percy."

"If his Grace wishes the affair to be so private," cried I, "I am afraid he wont inform his daughters of it."

"You of course will consider it as quite at an end," said my father, addressing himself to me.

"Oh certainly, Sir," answered I; "But how shall I get the news conveyed to Lady Maria?"

"Tell it to a mutual friend as a profound secret," said Mr Maitland dryly. "But why are you so anxious that Lady Maria should hear of her brother's disappointment?"

"Oh because it will provoke her so delightfully," cried I;—"The descendant of a hundred and fifty De Burghs to be rejected by a city merchant's daughter! It will ruin her in laces and lip-salve."

I was so enchanted with the prospect of my rival's vexation, that it was some moments ere I observed that Mr Maitland, actually turning pale, had shrunk from me.

as far as the end of the couch would permit him, and sat leaning his head on his hand with an air of melancholy reflection. Presently afterwards he was rising to take his leave, when a servant came to inform Miss Mortimer, that Mrs Wells, the woman whom Mr Maitland had rescued from the effect of my rashness, was below waiting to speak with her. "Stay a few minutes, Mr Maitland, and see your protegée," said Miss Mortimer to him as he was bidding her good morning. He immediately consented; while my father quitted the room, saying, "If the woman is come for money, Miss Mortimer, you may let me know. I always send these people what they want, and have done with them."

Mrs Wells, however, was come, not in quest of money, but of a commodity which the poor need almost as often, though they ask it less frequently. She wanted advice. Finding that Miss Mortimer was not alone, she was at first modestly unwilling to intrude upon the attention of the company. But Mr Maitland, who, I believe, possessed some talisman to unlock at his pleasure

every heart but mine, engaged her by a few simple expressions of interest to unfold the purpose of her coming. She told us, that her eldest daughter, Sally, had for some time been courted by a young man of decent character, and was inclined to marry him. "The girl must be a great fool," thought I, "for she can neither expect carriages nor jewels, and what else should tempt any woman to marry?" The lover, Mrs Wells said, could earn five-and-twenty or thirty shillings a week by his trade, which was that of a house-carpenter. This, together with Sally's earnings as a mantua-maker, might maintain the young couple in tolerable comfort. But they had no house, and could not furnish one without incurring debts which would be a severe clog on their future industry. The young man, however, being in love, was inclined to despise all prudential considerations; and, in spite of her mother's counsels, had almost inspired his mistress with similar temerity. Mrs Wells therefore begged of Miss Mortimer to fortify Sally with her advice, and to set before her the folly of so desperate a

venture. "Thanks to your excellent mother, Miss Percy," said she, "my children have forgotten poverty; and, indeed, no one rightly knows what it is, but they who have striven with it as I, have. Any other distress one may now and then forget; but hard creditors, and cold hungry children will not allow one to forget them." Her proposal was, that Miss Mortimer should prevail with the girl to resist her lover's solicitations for a few years, till the joint savings of the pair might amount to forty or fifty pounds, which she said would enable them to begin the world reputably.

"Forty or fifty pounds," cried I, "is that all!—Oh, if you are sure that Sally really wants to be married, I can settle that in a minute. I am sure I must have more than that left of my quarterly allowance."

"What are you talking of, Ellen?" cried Miss Arnold, who had just entered the room. You are not going to give away fifty pounds at once!"

"Why not?" answered I. "Probably I shall not want the money; or if I do, papa will advance my next quarter."

I had, I believe, at first offered my gift from a simple emotion of good-will; but now, taught by my friend's resistance, I began to claim some merit for my generosity; and glanced towards Mr Maitland in search of his approving look. But Mr Maitland had no approving look to reward a liberality which sprang from no principle, and called for no labour, and inferred no self-denial. His eye was fixed upon me with an expression of calm compassion, which seemed to say, "Poor girl! have even thy best actions no solid virtue in them?" Mrs Wells, however, had less discrimination. The poor know not what it is to give without generosity, for they possess nothing which can be spared without self-denial. Tears of gratitude filled her eyes while she praised and thanked me; but she positively refused to deprive me of such a sum. "No, no," said she, "let Robert and Sally work and save for two or three years; and in that time they will get a habit of patience and good management, which will be of as much use to them as money." The approving look which I had sought was now

bestowed upon Mrs Wells. "You judge very wisely Mrs Wells," said Mr Maitland. "But two or three years will seem endless to them; say one year, that we may not frighten them, and whatever they can both save in that time, I will double to them."

Mrs Wells thanked him, not with the servility of dependence, but with the warmth of one whom kindness had made bold. Then turning to me, and apologizing for the liberty she took, she begged my patronage for Sally in the way of her business. "I assure you, Ma'am," said she, "that Sally works very nicely; and if she could get the name of being employed by such as you, she would soon have her hands full."

I was thoroughly discomposed by this request. I could part with fifty pounds without inconvenience, but to wear a gown not made by Mrs Beetham, was a humiliation to which I could not possibly submit. Unwilling to disappoint, I knew not what to answer; but Miss Arnold instantly relieved my dilemma. "Bless you, good woman," cried she, "how could Miss Percy wear

such things as your daughter would make. Before she could have a pattern, it would be hacked about among half the low creatures in town."

Mrs Wells coloured very deeply. "I meant no offence," said she; "I thought perhaps Miss Percy might direct Sally how she wished her gowns to be made, and I am sure Sally would do as she was directed."

"Indeed, my good friend," answered I, "I can no more direct Sally in making a gown, than in making a steam-engine. But I will ask employment for her wherever I think I am likely to be successful. Come Miss Mortimer, I shall begin with you."

"Do," said Mr Maitland, in his dry manner. "Miss Mortimer can afford to spare the attraction of a fashionable gown."

It has been since discovered, that Mr Maitland did, that very day, provide for the accomplishment of his promise, in case that death or accident should prevent his fulfilling it in person. Miss Mortimer easily persuaded Sally to pursue the prudent course; and besides, exerted her influence so successfully, as to procure employment

for every hour of the girl's time. My profuse offer passed from my mind, and was forgotten. But their charity,—the charity of Christians,—had at all times little resemblance to the spurious quality which in my breast usurped the name. Theirs was the animated virtue, instinct with life divine!—mine, the mutilated stony image, which, even if it had been complete in all its parts, would still have wanted the living principle. Theirs was the blessed beam of Heaven, active, constant, universal!—mine the unprofitable, unsteady flash of the "troubled sea, which cannot rest."

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

CHAP. VII.

" Her reputation?" That was like her wit,
And seemed her manner and her state to fit.
Something there was—what, none presumed to say,
Clouds lightly passing on a smiling day;
Whispers and hints which went from ear to ear,
And mixed reports no judge on earth could clear.

CRABBE.

RECOVERED from my indisposition, I resumed my gay career. But who ever spent a week in retirement, without projecting some reform, however partial, some small restraint upon desire, or some new caution in its gratification? I determined to observe more circumspection in my conduct towards Lord Frederick; though Miss Arnold laboured to convince me, that our flirtation might now be carried on with more safety than ever, since the parties were aware that it could have no serious

issue. Tête à tête with her in my dressing-room, I could detect the fallacy of her arguments, and refused to be misled by them. The most imprudent being upon earth makes many a judicious resolution; and may trace his errors less to the weakness of his judgment, than to the feebleness of his self-command.

The first party which I joined after my convalescence, was at a concert and *petit souper* which Lady G. gave to fifty-eight of her particular friends. As soon as I entered the room, my attention was arrested by a groupe, consisting of Lady Maria de Burgh, her favourite Lady Augusta Loftus, Lord Frederick, and Lord Glendower. Lady Augusta seemed assiduous to entertain my admirer, who, lounging against a pillar with his eyes half shut, appeared only to study how he might answer her with the slightest possible exertion of mind or muscle. Perceiving me, Lady Maria touched her friend's arm, as if to direct her eye towards me; then whispered behind her fan somewhat which seemed immoderately entertaining to both. A rudeness which ought

to have awakened only my pity, roused my resentment, and I piously resolved to seize an early opportunity of retort. The party continued their merriment, and I even observed Lady Augusta endeavouring to engage Lord Frederick to join in it. This was too much; and I resolved to shew Lady Augusta that I was no such despicable rival. But I had been accustomed to accept, not to solicit the attentions of Lord Frederick, and I waited till he should accost me. Lord Frederick, however, seemed entirely insensible to my presence. His eye did not once wander towards me; indeed the assiduity of his companion left scarcely even his eyes at liberty. Weary of watching Lady Augusta's advances to my quondam admirer, I at last condescended to claim his notice by passing close to him. A distant bow was the only courtesy which I obtained. I was asked to sing, and chose an elaborate bravura, which Lord Frederick had often declared to be divine. In the midst of it I saw him break from his obsequious fair one and approach me. My heart, I own, bounded with triumph. Pre-

mature triumph, alas! He addressed our hostess, who was bending over me; pleaded indispensable business; and leaving the divine bravura to more disengaged hearers, withdrew.

I was disconcerted; for, like other beauties, I liked better to repulse presumption than to endure neglect. My song ended, I had remained for some time sullen and silent, regardless of the lavish commendations which were poured upon me; when, recollecting that my discomposure would afford matter of exultation to my rivals, I suddenly rallied my spirits, and looked round for some new instrument of offence. Lord Glendower, the reputed suitor of Lady Maria, still kept his station by her side. I contrived to engage him during the remainder of the evening. The penalty of my malice was three hours close attention to the dullest fool in England; for vice, too, requires her self-denials, though her disciples are not, like those of virtue, forewarned of the requisition. Languid, disgusted, and out of humour, I fatigued myself with laborious playfulness, till the se-

paration of the party released me from penance.

Lord Frederick's "indispensable business" was the next day explained by a report, that he had passed the night in a gaming-house, where he had lost five-and-twenty thousand pounds. Miss Arnold spoke with the tenderest compassion of this disaster, "smoothing my ruffled plumes," by ascribing it to the desperation occasioned by his late disappointment. Forgetting that she had so lately ridiculed my romantic estimate of the force of his passion, she suddenly appeared convinced that it was strong enough to account for the most frantic actions. Folly itself is not so credulous as self-conceit. I more than half believed, though I affected to disprove her assertion. It approached, indeed, to the truth more nearly than she suspected. Money, however obtained, was absolutely necessary to Lord Frederick; and mine being beyond his reach, he had recourse to fortune. But, in calculating upon the actions of the gay, the liberal Lord Frederick, the narrow motives of interest never once entered into my

account. Dazzled by the false spirit, indicated by the magnitude of his loss, and pleased with the cause to which vanity ascribed it, I had half pardoned his late neglect, when I that evening met him at Mrs Clermont's rout.

So crowded were the rooms that I was not aware when he entered; and when I first observed him, he was standing in close conversation with Miss Arnold. Even pride can make concessions where it imagines cause of pity. I condescended to give Lord Frederick another opportunity of renewing his attention, and moved towards him through the crowd. My friend and he were conversing with great earnestness; and, as I approached them from behind, I caught the last words of their dialogue. His lordship's speech concluded with the expression, "I should look confoundedly silly;"—Miss Arnold's answer was, "The thing is impossible,—he has not another relation upon earth, except ——." Seeing me at her side, Miss Arnold stopped abruptly, and, I think, changed colour; but I had no time to make observations,

for Lord Frederick, seizing my hand, exclaimed, "Ah you cruel creature, have you at last given me an opportunity to speak with you. I thought you had been determined to cut me, since old square-toes interfered." I carelessly answered, that I had not made up my mind on that subject:—but, had my reply been delayed a few moments, it could not have been uttered with truth; for just then Lady Maria came to request, with no small earnestness, that her brother would go and exhibit to Lady Augusta Loftus a trick with cards, which it seems he could perform with singular dexterity. "We shall see who will prevail," thought I, and I seated myself as if to evince my resolution of remaining where I was. Lord Frederick immediately excused himself to his sister; and she at last, in evident vexation, relinquished her attempt.

This little victory raised my spirits; and I enjoyed with double relish, and provoked with double industry, the jealous glances with which I was watched by Lady Maria and her fair friend. Lord Frederick, on

his part, had never been so assiduous to entertain. He flattered, made love, spoke scandal, and even threw out some sarcasms upon the jealousy of his sister. How had enmity perverted my mind, when I could tolerate this unnatural assassination! How had it darkened my understanding, when I shrunk not with suspicion from the heart which was dead to the sacred charities of kindred.

In the course of our conversation, Lord Frederick rallied me on the subject of the masked-ball, urging me to give my reasons for refusing the tickets. Weakly ashamed to be suspected of submitting to authority, I employed every excuse except the true one; and, among others, alleged, that I was unacquainted with the lady by whom the ball was to be given. Lord Frederick insisted upon introducing his relation, Lady St Edmunds, to me; declaring that he had often heard her express a desire to be of my acquaintance. I could not resist the temptation of this introduction, for Lady St Edmunds was of the highest fashion. I protested indeed that my resolution, with re-

gard to the masquerade, was immutable, but I suffered Lord Frederick to go in search of his gay relative.

He soon returned, leading a lady, in whose appearance some half-a-dozen wrinkles alone indicated the approach of the years of discretion. Her cheek glowed with more than youthful roses. Her eye flashed with more than cheerful fires. Her splendid drapery loosely falling from her shoulders, displayed the full contour of a neck whiter than virgin innocence, pure even from the faintest of those varying hues which stain the lillies of nature. She addressed me with much of the grace and all the ease of fashion, loaded me with compliments and caresses, and charmed me with the artful condescension which veils itself in respectful courtesy. She proposed to wait upon me the next day, and intreated that I would allow her the privilege of old acquaintance, by giving orders that she should be admitted. I readily consented, for indeed I was delighted with my new friend. I was dazzled with the freedom of her language, the boldness of her senti-

ments, and her apparent knowledge of the world. The partial admiration expressed for me, by one so much my superior in years and rank, warmed a heart accessible through every avenue of vanity; and I spent an hour in lively chit-chat with her and Lord Frederick, without once recollecting that her ladyship's fame was not quite so spotless as her bosom.

Faithful to her appointment, Lady St Edmunds called upon me the next morning; and though she looked less youthful, was as fascinating as ever. No charm of graceful sportiveness, of artful compliment, or of kindly seeming, was wanting to the attraction of her manners. I was accustomed to the adulation of men; and sometimes, when it was less dexterously applied, or when I was in a more rational humour, I could ask myself which the obsequious gentleman admired the most,—Miss Percy, or the pretty things they said to her. But let no one boast of being inaccessible to flattery, till he has withstood that of a superior; and let that superior be highly bred, seemingly disinterested and a woman. I did not, at the

time, perceive that Lady St Edmunds flattered me; I merely was convinced that she had a lively sensibility towards a kindred mind, and a generosity which could bestow unenvying admiration upon superior youth and beauty.

When she was about to retire, she mentioned her masked-ball, expressing a strong desire to see me there, and extending the request to Miss Arnold. With one of the deepest sighs I ever breathed, I told her of my unfeigned regret that it was out of my power to accept her invitation. Lady St Edmunds looked as if she read my thoughts. "I won't be denied," said she "Be as late as you will; but surely you may escape from your engagement for an hour or two at least. Come, dear Miss Percy, you would not be so mischievous as to spoil my whole evening's pleasure; and now that I know you, there is no thinking of pleasure without you."

I was again on the point of declining though with tears in my eyes, when I was interrupted by Miss Arnold. "I can assure your ladyship," said she "that we have

no engagement; only, our duenna does not approve of masquerades, and Ellen happens to be in a submissive frame just now."

I could better endure the weight of my shackles than the exhibition of them; and, the warm blood rushing to my cheek, I answered, "That I did not suppose Miss Mortimer, or any other person, pretended a right to control me; that I had merely yielded to entreaties, not submitted to authority."

"And why must the duenna's entreaties be more powerful than mine?" said Lady St Edmund's, laying her white hand upon my arm, and looking in my face with a soul-subduing smile.

"Dear Lady St Edmund's!" cried I, kissing her hand, "do not talk of entreaty. Lay some command upon me less agreeable to my inclination, that I may shew how eager I am to obey you. But indeed, I fear—I think—I—after giving my promise to Miss Mortimer, I believe I ought not to retract."

"Why not, my dear?" said Lady St Edmunds. "It is only changing your mind,

you know, which the whole sex does every day."

"You know, Ellen," said Miss Arnold, "the case is quite altered since you talked of it with Miss Mortimer. She did not object so much to the masked-ball, as to your going with ———.

"Juliet!" said I, stopping her with a frown, for I felt shocked that she should tell Lady St Edmunds that her nephew's attendance was objected to by Miss Mortimer.

"Ah!" cried Lady St Edmunds, with the prettiest air of reproach imaginable, "I see Miss Arnold is more inclined to oblige me than you are; so to her I commit my cause for the present, for now I positively must tear myself away. Good bye, my pretty advocate. Be sure you make me victorious over the duenna. Farewell, my lovely perverse one," continued she, kissing my cheek. "I shall send you tickets however. I issue only three hundred."

Lady St Edmunds retired, and left my heart divided between her and the masquerade. She was scarcely gone, when

Miss Mortimer came in; and, full of my charming visitor, I instantly began to pronounce her eulogium. I thought Miss Mortimer listened with very repulsive coldness; of course, a little heat of a less gentle kind was added to the warmth of my admiration, and my language became more impassioned. "I have been told that Lady St Edmunds is very insinuating," said Miss Mortimer; and this was all the answer I could obtain. My praise became more rapturous than ever. Miss Mortimer remained silent for some moments after I had talked myself out of breath. Perhaps she was considering how she might reply without offence, "Such manners," said she, "must indeed be engaging. I see their effect in the eloquence of your praise. I wish it were always safe to yield to their attraction."

"Bless me! Miss Mortimer," interrupted I, "you are the most suspicious being! I see you want me to suspect Lady St Edmunds of every thing that is bad, and for no earthly reason but because she is delightful!"

"Indeed, my dear Ellen," returned Miss Mortimer, "you wrong me. I should be the last person to taint your mind with any unfounded suspicion. But it is natural, you know, that years should teach us caution."

"Oh!" exclaimed I, fervently clasping my hands, "if age must chill all my affections, and leave me only a dead soul chained to a half-living body, may Heaven grant that my years may be few! May I go to my grave ere my heart cease to love and trust its fellows!"

"Dearest child!" cried Miss Mortimer, "may many a happy year improve and refine your affections; and may they long survive the enthusiasm which paints their objects as faultless! But is it not better that you should know a little of Lady St Edmunds' character, before intimacy confirm her power over you?"

"Why should I know anything more of her than I do? I can see that she has the most penetrating understanding, the most affectionate heart!"

"No doubt these are great endowments;

but something more may be necessary.—The proverb is not the less true for its vulgarity, which tells us, that the world will estimate us by our associates; and, what is still more important, the estimate will prove just. If you form intimacies with the worthless, or even with the suspected, ———"

"Worthless! suspected!" exclaimed I, my blood boiling with indignation; "who dares to use such epithets in speaking of Lady St Edmunds?"

"Be calm, Ellen. I did not, at the moment that I uttered these offensive words, intend any personal application. If I had, my language should have been less severe. But I can inform you, that the world has been less cautious, and that those epithets have been very freely applied to Lady St Edmunds!"

"Yes! perhaps by a set of waspish bigots, envious of her, who is herself so far above the meanness of envy,—or who cannot pardon her for refusing to make Sunday a day of penance!"

Miss Mortimer, though naturally one of the most timid creatures upon earth, was

as inflexible in regard to some particular opinions, as if she had had the nerves of a Hercules. " Indeed, Ellen," said she calmly; " it would be ungrateful in you, or any other woman of fashion, to charge the world with intolerance towards Sabbath-breakers. I fear that Lady St Edmunds would give little offence by her Sunday's parties, if she were circumspect in her more private conduct."

" Bless my heart, Miss Mortimer!" cried I, " what have I to do with the private conduct of all my acquaintance? What is it to me, if Lady St Edmunds spoil her children, or rule her husband, or lose a few hundred pounds at cards now and then?"

Miss Mortimer smiled,—" Even bigots," said she, " must acquit her Ladyship of all these faults, for she takes no concern with her children,—she is separated from her husband,—and certainly does not *lose* at cards."

" And so you, who pretend to preach charity towards all mankind, can condescend to retail second-hand calumny! You would have me desert an amiable, and, I

am persuaded, an injured woman, merely because she has the misfortune to be slandered!"

"When you know me better, Ellen," said Miss Mortimer meekly, "you will find, that it is not my practice to repeat any scandalous tale, without some better reason than my belief that it is true. I shall not at present defend the justice of the censures which have fallen upon Lady St Edmunds. I will merely offer you my opinion, in hopes that, a few hours hence, you may reconsider it. If a friend, whose worth you had proved, whose affection you had secured, were made a mark for the shafts of calumny,—far be it from you to seek a base shelter, leaving her unshielded, to be 'hit by the archers;' but, against the formation of a new acquaintance, the slightest suspicion ought, in my opinion, to be decisive. The frailty of a good name is as proverbial as its value; and virgin fame is far too precious to be ventured upon uncertainty, and far too frail to escape uninjured even from the appearance of hazard."

This speech was so long that it gave me time to cool, and so incontrovertible, that I found some difficulty in replying. Before I could summon a rejoinder, Miss Mortimer, who never pursued a victory, had quitted the room. She had left me an unpleasant subject of meditation; but she had allowed me to postpone the consideration of it for a few hours; so, in the meantime, I turned my thoughts to the masquerade.

And first, by way of safeguard against temptation, I thought it best to lay down an immutable resolution that I would not go. It was very hard, indeed, to be deprived of such a harmless amusement; but, as I had given an unlucky promise, I purposed magnanimously to adhere to it, resolving, however, to indemnify myself the next opportunity. Thus fortified, I began to indulge my fancy in painting what *might have been* the pleasures of the masquerade. I imagined, (there was surely no harm in imagining!) how well I could have personated the fair Fatima,—how happily the turban would have accorded with the Grecian

turn of my head,—how softly the transparent sleeves of my caftan would have shaded my rounded arm,—how favourably the Turkish costume would have shewn the light limb, and the elastic step. I invented a hundred witticisms which I might have uttered,—a hundred compliments which I might have received. Above all, I dwelt upon the approbation, the endearments of the charming Lady St Edmunds, till my heart bounded with the ideal joy. When I retired to rest, the same gay visions surrounded me; and I gladly awoke to pursue them again in my waking dreams.

How suitable to our nature is that commandment which places upon the thoughts the first restraints of virtue! It was painful to interrupt my delightful reverie, by renewing my resolutions of self-denial, so I passed them over as already fixed, insensible how fatally I was undermining their foundations. The bribe must be poor indeed, which the aids of imagination cannot render irresistible. The longer my fancy dwelt upon my lost pleasure, the more severe seemed my privation, the more un-

founded Miss Mortimer's prejudice. From the wish that the thing had been right, the step was easy to the belief that it could not be *very* wrong. Before the morning, my inclination had so far bewildered my judgment, that Miss Arnold found no difficulty in persuading me to refer the matter to my father; and, regardless of my promise, to abide by his decision.

She herself undertook the statement of the case; for it happened, I know not how, that, even when she spoke only truth, her statements always served a purpose better than mine. The effect of her adroit representation was, that my father decided in favour of the masquerade; observing, that "Miss Mortimer, though a very good woman, had some odd notions, which it would not do for every body to adopt."

Thus it seemed determined that I was to enjoy the amusement upon which I had set my heart. And yet I was not satisfied. My gay visions were no sooner likely to be realized, than they lost half their charms. A slight scrutiny into my own mind would have enabled me to trace the cause of this

change to a consciousness of error; but a vague anticipation of the issue was sufficient to prevent me from entering upon the inquiry. I therefore contented myself with attempting to impose upon my own judgment, by asserting that, since my father was satisfied, I was at full liberty to pursue my inclination. "To be sure," said Miss Arnold, "when Mr Percy has given his permission, who else has any right to interfere?"

"And will you, my dear sir, speak of it to Miss Mortimer?" said I, anxious to transfer that task to any one who would undertake it.

"Oh, I'll manage all that," cried Miss Arnold. "If Mr Percy were to mention the matter to Miss Mortimer, it would look as if he thought himself accountable to her; and then there would be no end of it; for she fancies already that she should be consulted in every thing that concerns you,—as if Mr Percy, who has so long superintended the greatest concerns in the kingdom, could not direct his own family without her interference!"

I believe my father, as well as myself, might have some latent misgivings of mind, which made him not unwilling to accept of Miss Arnold's offered services. "I have so many important affairs to mind," said he, "that I shall probably think no more of such a trifle; so I commission you, Miss Juliet, to let Miss Mortimer know my opinion; which, I dare say, you will do discreetly, for you seem a civil judicious young lady. Elizabeth, poor soul, meant all for the best; thinking to save me a few pounds, I suppose. But you may let her know, that what it may be very commendable in her to save is altogether below my notice. When a man has thousands, and tens of thousands passing through his hands every day, it gives him a liberal way of thinking. But as for a woman, who never was mistress of a hundred pounds at a time, what can she know of liberality?"

My father had now entered on a favourite topic, the necessary connection between riches and munificence. Miss Arnold listened respectfully, approving by smiles, nods, and single words of assent; while I

stood wrapt in my meditations, if I may give that name to the succession of unsightly images which conscience forced into my mind, and which I as quickly banished. Having triumphantly convinced an antagonist who ventured not upon opposition, my father withdrew; and left my friend and me to consult upon our communication to Miss Mortimer.

"She will be in a fine commotion," said I, endeavouring to smile, when she hears that we are going to this masquerade after all. But since you have undertaken the business, Juliet, you may break it to her to-night, while I am at the opera; and then the fracas will be partly over before I come home."

"I have been just thinking," said Miss Arnold, "all the time that your father was making that fine oration, that it would be wiser not to break it to her at all. Where is the necessity for her knowing any thing of the matter? We shall have other invitations for the same evening; so we may go somewhere else first, and afterwards look in for

an hour or two at the ball. Nobody need know that we have been there."

"What, Juliet! would you have me steal off in that clandestine way, as if I were afraid or ashamed to do what my father approves of? If I am to act in defiance of Miss Mortimer, I will do it openly, and not slavishly pilfer my right, as if I did not dare to assert it."

"Don't be angry Ellen," said Miss Arnold, soothingly; "I shall most willingly do whatever you think best. But, for my part, I would almost as soon give up the masquerade, as be lectured about it for the next three weeks."

"But, to give Miss Mortimer her due," returned I, "she does not lecture much."

"That is true," replied Miss Arnold. "But then she will look so dolefully at us. I am sure I would rather be scolded heartily at once."

In this last sentiment, I cordially sympathised; for the silent upbraiding of the eye is the very poetry of reproach—it addresses itself to the imagination. "I wish," cried I, sighing from the very bottom of

my heart, "that I had never heard of this ball!"

"In my opinion," said Miss Arnold, "it would save both us and Miss Mortimer a great deal of vexation, if she were never to hear more of it."

"Say no more of that, Juliet," interrupted I; "I am determined not to take another step in the business without her knowledge."

Miss Arnold was silent for a few moments; and when her voice again drew my attention, I perceived tears in her eyes. "Well, Ellen," said she, "since you are so determined, I see only one way of settling the matter quietly. I will give my ticket to Miss Mortimer,—she can have no objection to your going, if she be there herself to watch you."

"Never name such a thing to me Juliet! What! leave you moping alone, fancying all the pleasure you might have had, while I am amusing myself abroad. I had rather never see a mask in my life!"

"I should prefer any thing to bringing her ill-humour upon you," said Miss Ar-

nold; "and since you persist in telling her, I see no other way of escape. I shall most cheerfully resign the masquerade to give you pleasure."

"My own dear Juliet!" cried I, locking my arms round her neck, while unbidden tears filled my eyes, "how can you talk of giving me pleasure by sacrificing your own, when you know that more than half the delight of my life is to share its joys with you." Nor were these the empty sounds of compliment, nor even the barren expression of a passing fervour. My purse, my ornaments, my amusements, even the assiduities of my admirers, all on which my foolish heart was most fixed, I freely shared with her. Yet, this same Juliet—But is it for me to complain of ingratitude?—for me, who, favoured by an all bountiful Benefactor, abused his gifts, despised his warnings, neglected his commands, abhorred his intercourse! Let those who are conscious of similar demerit, cease to reproach the less flagrant baseness, which repays with evil the feeble benefits that man bestows on man.

On the present occasion, Juliet's influence prevailed with me so far, that, before we separated, I had agreed to a compromise. I persisted, indeed, in refusing to go clandestinely to the masquerade, but I adhered to my purpose of going; and pledged my word, that, in order to avoid all importunity on the subject, I would leave Miss Mortimer in ignorance of my determination, till the very hour of its accomplishment. Miss Arnold undertook to keep my father silent, which she performed in the most dexterous manner; and with the more ease, because, perhaps, he was conscious that the subject furnished materials for confession as well as for narrative.

CHAP. VIII.

——————— You squander freely,
But have you wherewithal? Have you the fund
For these outgoings? If you have, go on;
If you have not—stop in good time, before
You outrun honesty.

CUMBERLAND. (from Diphilus.)

IN defiance of Miss Mortimer's advice, I returned Lady St Edmunds' visit without delay. I made, indeed, some general inquiries into the character of my new favourite; and though few were inclined to tell what I shewed myself unwilling to hear, I learnt that she was said to play games of chance with extraordinary skill and success; and that she was suspected of impropriety in a point where detection is still more fatal. It is unfortunate that prudence

and self-sufficiency are so rarely found together, since he who will make no use of the wisdom of others, certainly needs an extraordinary fund of his own. I was predetermined to consider whatever could be advanced against Lady St Edmunds, as the effect of malicious misrepresentation. My self-conceit pointed me out as no improper person to stem the tide of injustice; and, by an admirable, though in this case an abused provision in our nature, my kindly feelings towards her were strengthened at once by my intentions to serve her, and by my resentment of her supposed wrongs.

Lady St Edmunds, on her part, more than met my advances. She treated me with a distinction which I ascribed solely to the most flattering partiality; and sought my society with an eagerness in which I suspected no aim beyond its own gratification. Even now, when experience has taught me to look through these fair seemings, I am convinced that her affection was not entirely feigned; for I have seldom met with a heart so callous, as not to be touched with a transient sympathy at least, by the honest en-

thusiasm of youth. In the mean time, I had the more confidence in the disinterestedness of her regard, because I could detect no sinister motive for her attentions. Once, and only once, she had engaged me in play; but the stake was not large, and I rose a winner.

Miss Mortimer nevertheless continued her opposition to the acquaintance, remonstrating against it with a perseverance and warmth which alternately surprised and provoked me. Regarding her warnings as the voice of that cold ungenerous suspicion which I imagined to be incident to age, I took a perverse delight in extolling the attractions of my new friend, and in magnifying their power over me. One prophecy of my Cassandra was impressed upon my recollection, by its containing the only severe expression that ever my incorrigible wilfulness could extort from the forbearing spirit of the Christian. Among other rapturous epithets, I called Lady St Edmunds my dear enchantress. "Well may you give her that name," said Miss Mortimer, "for

she is drawing you into a circle where nothing good or holy must tread; and if you will follow her to the tempter's own ground, you must bid farewell to better spirits. The wise and the virtuous will one by one forsake you, until you have no guide but such as lead to evil, and no companions but such as take advantage of your errors, or share in your ruin."

It is astonishing, that beings formed to look forward so anxiously to the future, when anxiety can be of no avail, should often treat it with such perverse disregard, when foresight might indeed be useful. Will it be believed, that, from this very conversation, I went to exhibit myself to half the town, as Lady St Edmunds' companion, by attending her to an auction?

The sale was in consequence of an execution in the house of a lady of high fashion; and thither of course came all those of her own rank, who wished to be relieved of their time, their money, or their curiosity. Lord Frederick de Burgh, who seemed the almost constant associate of his fair relative, was of our party. Indeed I could not

help observing, upon all occasions, that his attentions to me were infinitely more particular, since my father had announced his decision. But I regarded that decision as final; and merely inferred, that Lord Frederick, like Miss Arnold, perceived the safety of a flirtation, which could lead to no consequence; or that, in the true spirit of his sex, he grew eager in pursuit, when attainment appeared difficult.

As the sale proceeded, a hundred useless toys were exposed, and called forth a hundred vain and unlovely emotions. Curiosity, admiration, desire, impatience, envy, and resentment, chased each other over many a fair face; and the flush of angry disappointment, or of unprofitable victory, stained many a cheek from whence the blush of modesty had faded for ever. I took out my pencil to caricature a group, in which a spare dame, whose face combined no common contrast of projection and concavity, was darting from her sea-green eyes sidelong flames upon a china jar, which was surveyed with complacent smiles by its round and rosy purchaser. But my la-

bours were interrupted, and from an amused spectator of the scene, I was converted into a keen actor, when the auctioneer exposed a tortoise-shell dressing-box, magnificently inlaid with gold. Art had exhausted itself in the elegance of the pattern and the delicacy of the workmanship. It was every way calculated to arrest the regards of fine ladies; for, like them, it was useless and expensive in proportion to its finery. It was put up at fifty guineas; less, as we were assured by the auctioneer, than half its value. Rather than allow such matchless beauty to be absolutely thrown away, I bade for the bauble. It proved equally attractive to others, and my fair opponents soon raised its price to seventy pounds. There for a while it made a pause, and no one seemed inclined to go farther; but this was still far below its value. I hesitated for a few moments; and then, in the conviction that nobody would bid more, increased my offer. It seems I was mistaken. The lady with whom, but for my perseverance, the prize would have remained, measured me with a very contemptuous look, and bade again

with a composure which seemed to say, "does the girl fancy she can contend with me!" This was attacking me on the weak side. I instantly bade again. The lady coolly did the same. I, growing more warm, went on. The lady proceeded, with smiles not quite of courtesy; till, in exchange for my discretion, my temper, and a hundred and fifteen pounds, I had gained the tortoise-shell dressing-box.

The costly toy was already in my possession, and already every eye was turned upon me with envy, sarcasm, or compassion, before I remembered that it was necessary to pay for my purchase. In some perplexity I began to search for my purse; recollecting, not without dismay, that it did not contain above twenty guineas. I had indeed a further supply at home, but the law of the sale required that every purchase should be paid for upon the spot, and I was obliged to apply to Lady St Edmunds for assistance. This was the first time that ever I had found occasion to borrow money; and I shall never forget the embarrassment which it cost me. With a confusion which

would have dearly paid for the possession of ten thousand baubles, I, in a timid, scarcely intelligible whisper, begged Lady St Edmunds to lend me the necessary sum, assuring her that it should be repaid that very day. Her ladyship at first frankly consented to my request; but suddenly recollecting herself, declared that she had not a guinea about her; and, without waiting for my concurrence, called upon Lord Frederick to relieve my difficulty. Giddy and imprudent as I was, I shrunk from incurring this obligation to Lord Frederick. I at first positively refused his aid; and while, for a few minutes, I sat affecting to examine my purchase, I was cordially wishing that its materials were still in opposite hemispheres, and endeavouring to gain courage for a petition to some other of my acquaintance.

I at last fixed upon a young lady of fortune with whom I had contracted some intimacy; and, under pretence of exhibiting my box, beckoned her towards me, and requested her to lend me the money. With an aspect of profound amazement, she ex-

claimed, "La my dear! how can you think of such a thing? I have not ten pounds in the world. I never have. It is always spent before I can lay a finger on it." "Indeed! I was in hopes you were in cash just now, for I thought I observed you bid for this box." "Oh, one must bid now and then for a little amusement! But I assure you I had no thoughts of buying such a splendid affair. I must leave that to those who have more money than they know what to do with."

I could perceive a tincture of malice in the smile which accompanied these words; and turning from her, resumed my conversation with Lady St Edmunds. Her ladyship rallied me unmercifully upon what she called my prudery; asking me, in a very audible whisper, what sort of interest I expected Lord Frederick to exact, which made me so afraid of becoming his debtor. Lord Frederick himself joined in the raillery; and, laughing, offered to recommend me to an honest Jew, if I preferred such a creditor. Their manner of treating the subject made me almost ashamed of having refused Lord

Frederick's assistance, especially as I was certain that the obligation might be discharged in an hour. I suspected, indeed, though I was but imperfectly acquainted with the state of my funds, that they were insufficient for this demand; but I knew that Miss Arnold had money, because I had divided my quarterly allowance with her, and had not since observed her to incur any serious expence. Besides, I was convinced that my father would permit me to draw upon him in advance, so that at all events I should be able to discharge my debt on the following day. I therefore half playfully, half in earnest, accepted of Lord Frederick's offered aid; and he instantly delivered the money to me with a gallantry, which shewed that a man of fashion can, upon extraordinary occasions, be polite.

When I had received the notes, I jestingly asked him what security I should give him for their repayment? Lord Frederick took my hand, and drawing from my finger a ring of small value, said, with more seriousness than I expected, "This shall be my

pledge; but you must not imagine that I shall restore it for a few paltry guineas. You may have it again as soon as you will, on a fit occasion." I could have dispensed with this piece of gallantry, which was conducted too seriously for my taste; but a lady, like a member of Parliament, must accept of no favours if she would preserve the right of remonstrance, and I allowed Lord Frederick to keep the ring.

Soon afterwards we returned home, and I proceeded to examine the state of my funds. I was astonished to find that my bureau did not contain above ten pounds. I searched every drawer and concealment, wondering at intervals what could possibly have become of my money,—a wonder, I believe, in which the fugitive nature of guineas involves every fair lady who keeps no exact register of their departure. Thus employed, I was found by Miss Arnold, to whom I immediately unfolded my dilemma; calling upon her to assist me with her recollection, as to the disposal of my funds, and with her purse, in supply of their present deficiency. On the first point,

she was tolerably helpful to me, recalling to my mind many expences which I had utterly forgotten ; but, in regard to the second, she protested, with expressions of deep regret, that she could yield me no assistance. " You may well look astonished, dearest Ellen," pursued she, " considering your noble generosity to me. But indeed, nothing could have happened more unfortunately. It was only yesterday that I visited my brother, and happened to tell him what a princely spirit you had, and how liberal you had been to me. The deuce take my tongue for being so nimble,—but it is all your own fault, Ellen; for you wont let me praise you to your face, and one can't always be silent. So, just then, in came a fellow with a long bill for some vile thing or another, and my brother bid me lend him my money that he might settle with the creature. What could I do, you know ? I could not refuse. But if I had once guessed that you could possibly want it, I should as soon have lent him my heart's blood."

I suffered the tale to conclude without

interruption; for indeed I was fully as much astonished as I looked. I had by no means understood that my friend was upon such terms with her brother as to incline her to lend him money, nor that he was in such circumstances as to need to borrow. A doubt of her truth, however, never once darkened my mind. Self-love prevented me, as it daily prevents thousands, from making the very obvious reflection, that one who could be disingenuous with others to serve me, might be disingenuous with me to serve herself. Miss Arnold proceeded to reproach herself in the bitterest manner for her improvidence in parting with the money, and seemed so heartily vexed, that the little spleen which my disappointment had at first excited, entirely subsided; and I comforted my friend as well as I was able, by assuring her that my father would advance whatever money I desired.

Miss Arnold now, in her turn, was silent, wearing a look of grave consideration. "If I were in your place, Ellen," said she at last, "I don't think I would mention this matter to Mr Percy."

" Not mention it!" said I, " why not?"

" Because," returned Miss Arnold, " I see no end it can serve, except to make him angry! You know his pompous notions; and, after what has passed, I am sure he will think your borrowing money from Lord Frederick an act of downright rebellion."

" Indeed," returned I, " that is very likely; but I promised to repay Lord Frederick to-morrow; and I have no other way of obtaining the money."

" Poh! my dear, you are so punctilious about trifles! What can it possibly signify to Lord Frederick whether he be repaid to-morrow, or the day after?"

" Why, to be sure, it cannot signify much; only, as I have given my promise, I do not like to break it."

" Well, really, Ellen, if I were to shut my eyes, I could sometimes fancy you had been brought up with some queer old aunt in the country. What difference can one day make? And I am sure, by the end of the week, at farthest, I could get the money from my brother, and settle the whole matter peace-

ably! Do take my advice, and say nothing about it to your father; he will be so angry; and you know, at the worst, you can tell him at any time."

Had my mind been well regulated, or my judgment sound, Miss Arnold's argument would itself have defeated her purpose; and the very conviction of my father's disliking my debt to Lord Frederick would have determined me that it should, at all hazards, be repaid. But I was fated, in many instances, to suffer the penalty of those perverted habits of mind, which imposed upon me a sort of moral disability of choosing right, as often as a choice was presented to me. Misled by an artful adviser, or rather, perhaps, by my own inveterate abhorrence of reproof, I chose that clandestine path, in which none can tread with peace or safety. In this fatal decision began a long train of evil.

Warned by my example, let him who is entering upon life review, with a suspicious eye, the transactions which he is inclined to conceal from the appointed guardians of his virtue. If the subject be of

moment, let him be wisely fearful to rely upon his own judgment;—if it be trivial, let not concealment swell it to disastrous importance. If we have, unfortunately, a tendency to creep through the winding covered path, let him not strengthen by one additional act a habit so fatal to the lofty port of honour. If, like me, he be of a frank and open nature, let him not, to escape a transient evil, sink the light heart, and pervert the simple purpose, and bend the erect dignity of truth. Let him who can tread firm in conscious soundness of mind, leave the stealthy course for those to whom nature has given no better means of attaining their end. The low and tangled way, the subtle tortuous progress, suits the base earth-worm; let creatures of a nobler mould advance erect and steady.

Having dissuaded me from using the only means of discharging my debt without delay, Miss Arnold, like a cautious general, contented herself with fortifying the post she had taken; and, for the present, carried her operations no further. But, the next day, she took occasion to ask me,

with a careless air, "whether I had written a note of excuse to Lord Frederick?" I answered that I had not thought of it. "You intend writing, of course," said Miss Arnold, with that look of decision which has often served the purpose of argument.

"Don't you think it will be rather awkward?" said I.

"That you should not write, you mean? —Very awkward, indeed. And then I am sure you ought never to lose an opportunity of writing a note, for I know nobody who has such a talent for turning these things neatly."

The indistinct idea of impropriety which was floating in my mind was put to flight by the nonchâlance of Miss Arnold's manner; for, when reason and conscience are deposed from their rightful authority at home, it is amazing how abjectly they learn to bend, not to the passions only, but to impulse merely external. I wrote the note to Lord Frederick. My lover, for now I may fairly call him so, contrived to reply to my billet in such terms as, with the help of Miss Arnold's counsels, pro-

duced a rejoinder. This again occasioned another; and notes, sonnets, epistles in verse, and billet-doux passed between us, till the folly had nearly assumed the form of a regular correspondence. All this was, of course, carried on without the knowledge of my father or Miss Mortimer; and so rapid are the inroads of evil, that I soon began to find a mysterious pleasure in the dexterity which compassed this furtive intercourse.

In the meantime, Miss Arnold was in no haste to perform her promise. Day after day she found some excuse for not going to ask her money, or some pretence for returning without it; and day after day she persuaded me to wait for its restitution; till the uneasy feeling of undischarged obligation subsided by degrees, and the natural disquiet of a debtor was nearly lost in the giddiness of perpetual amusement.

As the masked-ball drew near, my eagerness for it had completely revived. It may seem strange, considering the multitude of my frivolous pleasures, that any single one should have awakened such ar-

dour. But a masquerade was now the only amusement which was new to me; and I had already begun to experience that craving for novelty which is incident to all who seek for happiness where it never was and never will be found,—in bubbles which amuse the sense, but cheat the longing soul.

So entirely was I occupied in anticipating my new pleasure, that I should have had neither thought nor observation to bestow upon any other subject, had not conscience sometimes turned my attention to Miss Mortimer. I thought she looked ill and melancholy. Her complexion, always delicate, had faded to a sickly hue. Her eyes were sunk and hollow; and the jealous watchfulness of one who has given cause of complaint, made me remark that they were often fixed sadly upon me. I half suspected that she had discovered my intended breach of faith; and wondered whether it were possible that my misconduct could make such an impression upon her mind. I was relieved from this suspicion by the frankness with which she one day lamented to me that my father, for some reason which

she could not divine, refused to permit a party to be formed for the 5th of May. "I could have wished," said she, "to make that evening pass more gaily than I fear it will. Dear Ellen, how like you are to your mother when you blush!"

"Then I am sure," said I, "I wish I could blush always, for there is nobody I should like so much to resemble."

"Well," said Miss Mortimer, "were it not for the fear of making you vain, I could tell you, that there is a more substantial resemblance; for she, like you, knew how to resign her strongest inclinations in compliance with the wishes of her friends."

This was too much. Conscience-struck, and quite thrown off my guard, I exclaimed "Like me! Oh! she was no more like me, than an angel of light is to a dark designing ——." Recollecting that I was betraying myself, I stopped.

Miss Mortimer turned upon me a smile so kind, so confiding, that as oft as it rises to my memory I abhor myself. "Nay, Ellen," said she, "if I am to be your confessor, lay open the sins which do really

beset you; unless, as Mr Maitland would say, you are afraid that I should have a sinecure."

"I have a great mind," cried I, "to make a resolution, that I will never do a wrong thing again without confessing it to somebody!"

"The resolution would be a good one," said Miss Mortimer, "provided you could rely upon the judgment and integrity of your confessor; and provided you are sure that the pain of exposing your faults to another will not lead you to conceal them more industriously from yourself."

"Oh! I am sure I could never do wrong without being sensible of it. But the misfortune is, that people have not the right method of talking of my faults. They always contrive to say something provoking. You need not smile. It is not that I am so uncandid that I cannot endure to be blamed; for there's Juliet often finds fault with me, and I never grow angry."

"Well," Ellen," said Miss Mortimer, "if ever you should be inclined to make trial of me, I promise you never intention-

ally to say any thing provoking. In dexterity I shall not pretend to vie with Miss Arnold, but in affectionate interest I will yield to none. You have a claim upon my indulgence, which your errors can never cancel; especially as I am sure that they will never lean towards artifice or meanness."

The heart must be callously vile, which can bear to be stabbed with the words of abused confidence. I sprung away in search of Miss Arnold, that I might retract my promise of concealing from Miss Mortimer the affair of the masquerade. I was met by the dress-maker, who, loaded with parcels and band-boxes, came to fit on the attire of the fair Fatima; and, during the hour which was consumed in this operation, the ardour of my sincerity had cooled so far, that Miss Arnold easily prevailed on me to let matters remain as we had first arranged them.

How often, I may say how invariably, did my better feelings vanish, ere they issued into action! But feeling is, in its very nature, transient. It is at best the meteor's

blaze, shedding strong, but momentary day; while principle, the true principle, be it faint at first as the star whose ray hath newly reached our earth, is yet the living light of the higher heaven; which never more will leave us in utter darkness, but lend a steady beam to guide our way.

CHAP. IX.

——— There we
Solicit pleasure, hopeless of success;
Waste youth in occupations only fit
For second childhood; and devote old age
To sports which only childhood could excuse.
There they are happiest who dissemble best
Their weariness; and they the most polite,
Who squander time and treasure with a smile,
Though at their own destruction.

COWPER.

THE fifth of May arrived; and never did lover, waiting the hour of meeting, suffer more doubts and tremors than I did, lest Mrs Beetham should disappoint me of my evening's paraphernalia. Although I had ordered the dress to be at my bed-side as soon as I awoke, the faithless mantua-maker detained it till after two o'clock; and the intermediate hours were consumed in fits of anger, suspence, and despondency. At last

it came ; and I hastened to ascertain its becomingness and effect. I knew that Miss Mortimer was closeted with a medical friend ; I had, therefore, no interruption to fear from her. Yet I locked myself into my dressing-room, because I could not, without constraint, allow even Miss Arnold to witness those rehearsals of vanity, which I was not ashamed to exhibit before Him who remembers that we are but dust. Others may smile at this and many other instances of my folly. I look back upon them as on the illusions of delirium, and shudder whilst I smile.

I was practising before a looking-glass the attitudes most favourable to the display of my dress and figure, when my attention was drawn by the sound of bustle in the staircase. I opened my door to discover the cause of the noise, and perceived some of the servants bearing Miss Mortimer, to all appearance lifeless. In horror and alarm, I sprung towards her ; and in answer to some incoherent questions, I learnt, that she had had a long private conference with Dr ——, and that he had scarcely left

the house, when she had fainted away. A servant had hastened to recall the surgeon, but his carriage had driven off too quickly to be overtaken.

The dastardly habits of self-indulgence had so estranged me from the very forms of sickness or of sorrow, that I now stood confounded by their appearance; and if a menial, whose very existence I scarcely deigned to remember, had not far excelled me in considerate presence of mind, the world might then have lost one of its chief ornaments, and I the glorious lesson of a Christian's life—of a Christian's death! By means of the simple prescriptions of this poor girl, Miss Mortimer revived. Her first words were those of thankfulness for all our cares; her next request that she might be left alone. Recollecting my strange attire, which alarm had driven from my mind, I felt no disinclination to obey; but the girl, whose assistance had already been so useful, begged for permission to remain. "Indeed, Ma'am," said she, "you ought not to be left alone while you are so weak and ill."

"Oh I am weaker than a child!" cried Miss Mortimer; "But go, my dear: I shall not be alone! I know where the weakest shall assuredly find strength!"

The countenance of the person to whom she spoke, gave signal of intelligence; the rest stared with vacant wonder. All obeyed Miss Mortimer's command; and I hastened to lay aside my Turkish drapery, which, for some minutes, I had almost unconsciously been screening from observation behind the magnitude of our fat housekeeper.

As soon as I had resumed my ordinary dress, I stole back to the door of Miss Mortimer's apartment. I listened for a while,—but all was still. I entered softly, and beheld Miss Mortimer upon her knees, her hands clasped in supplication; the flush of hope glowing through the tears which yet trembled on her cheek; her eyes raised with meek confidence, as the asking infant looks up in his mother's face. I was not unacquainted with the attitude of devotion. *That* I might have studied even at our theatres, where a mockery of prayer often

insults both taste and decency. I had even preserved from my childish days, a habit of uttering every morning a short "form of sound words." But the spirit of prayer had never touched my heart; and when I beheld the signs of vital warmth attend that which I had considered as altogether lifeless, it seemed like the moving pictures in the gallery of Otranto, portentous of something strange and terrible. "Good heavens! my dear Miss Mortimer," exclaimed I, advancing towards her as she rose, and wiped the tears from her eyes, "surely something very distressing has happened to you."

"Nothing new has happened," answered she, holding out her hand kindly towards me; "only I have an additional proof that I am by nature, a poor, timid, trustless creature."

"Ah!" cried I, "do trust me. I can be as secret as the grave, and there is nothing on earth I won't do to make you comfortable again."

"I thank you, dear Ellen," answered Miss Mortimer; "but I have no secret to

tell; and, to make me comfortable, you must minister to both body and mind. I have long been trifling with a dangerous disorder. I have acted in regard to it as we are wont to do in regard to the diseases of our souls,—deceived myself as to its existence, because I feared to encounter the cure,—and now I must submit to an operation so tedious, so painful!"—She stopped, shuddering. I was so much shocked, that I had scarcely power to inquire whether there were danger in the experiment. "Some danger there must be," said Miss Mortimer; "but it is not the danger which I fear. Even such cowards as I can meet that which they are daily accustomed to contemplate. If it had been the will of Heaven, I would rather have died than—— But it is not for me to choose. Shall I presume to reject any means by which my life may be prolonged? Often, often have I vowed," continued she, with strong energy of manner, "that I would not 'live to myself.' And was all false and hollow! Was this but the vow of the hypocrite, the self-deceiver!"

"Oh no!" cried I, "that is impossible. Before I knew you I might be prejudiced. But now I see that you are always good,—always the same. You cannot be a hypocrite."

This testimony, extorted from me by uniform consistent uprightness, was answered only by a distrustful shake of the head; for Miss Mortimer habitually lent a suspicious ear to the praise of her own virtues; and was accustomed to judge of her thoughts and actions, not by the opinion of others, but by a careful comparison with the standard of excellence. Tears trickled down her cheeks while she upbraided herself as one who, having pretended to give up all, kept back a part; and even those tears she reproached as symbols of distrust and fear, rather than of repentance. We soon grow weary of witnessing strong feeling in which we cannot fully sympathize. I hinted to Miss Mortimer that a short rest would compose her spirits, and recruit her strength; and, having persuaded her to lie down, I left her.

Only a few months had passed since the

fairest dream of pleasure would have vanished from my mind at the thought that the life of the meanest servant of our household was to hang upon the issue of a doubtful, dangerous experiment. Only a few months had passed since the sufferings of a friend would have banished sleep from my pillow, and joy from my most chosen delights. But intemperate pleasure is not more fatal to the understanding than to the heart. It is not more adverse to the "spirit of a sound mind," than to the "spirit of love." Social pleasures, call we them! Let the name no more be prostituted to that which is poison to every social feeling. Four months of dissipation had elapsed; and the distress, the danger of my own friend, and my mother's friend, now made no change in my scheme of pleasure for the evening. I was merely perplexed how to impart that scheme to the poor invalid. Conscience, indeed, did not fail to remind me, that to bestow this night upon amusement was robbery of friendship and humanity; but I was unhappily practised in the art of silencing her whispers. I assured myself

that if my presence could have been essentially useful to Miss Mortimer, I should cheerfully have sacrificed my enjoyment to her's; but I was certain that if I remained at home, the sight of her melancholy would depress me so much as to make my company a mere burden. I endeavoured to persuade myself that, after the scene of the morning, my spirits needed a cordial; and a sudden fit of economy represented to me the impropriety of throwing aside as useless, a dress which had cost an incredible sum. At the recollection of this dress, my thoughts at once flew from excusing my folly to anticipating its delights; and, in a moment, I was already in the ball-room, surrounded with every pleasure, but those of reason, taste, and virtue.

This heartless selfishness may well awaken resentment or contempt; but it ought not to excite surprise. The sickly child, whose helplessness needs continual care, whose endless cravings require endless supplies, whose incessant complainings extort incessant consolation, acquires the undeserved partiality of his mother. The very flower

which we have cherished in the sunshine, and sheltered from the storm, attains, in our regard, a value not its own; and whoever confines his cares, and his ingenuity, to his own gratification, will find, that self-love is not less rapid, or less vigorous in its progress, than any better affection of the soul.

All my endeavours, however, could not make me satisfied with my determination. I therefore resorted to my convenient friend, with whose honied words I could always qualify my self-upbraidings. I opened the case, by saying, that I believed we should be obliged to give up the masquerade after all; but I should have been terribly disappointed if that opinion had passed uncontroverted. I was, however, in no danger. Miss Arnold knew exactly when she might contradict without offence; and did not fail to employ all her persuasion on the side where it was least necessary. This question, therefore, was quickly settled; but another still remained,—how were we to announce our purpose to Miss Mortimer? With this part of the subject, inclination

had nothing to do; and therefore we found this point so much more difficult to decide, that when we were dressed, and ready to depart, the matter was still in debate.

It was, however, suddenly brought to an issue, by the appearance of Miss Mortimer. She had remained alone in her apartment during the early part of the evening; and now entered the drawing-room with her wonted aspect of serene benevolence, a little "sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought." I involuntarily retreated behind Miss Arnold, who herself could not help shrinking back. Miss Mortimer advanced towards her with the most unconscious air of kindness. "You are quite equipped for conquest, Miss Arnold," said she. "I never saw any thing so gracefully fantastic." She had now obtained a view of my figure, and the truth seemed to flash upon her at once; for she started, and changed colour.

A dead silence followed, for indeed I did not dare to look up, much less to speak. Miss Arnold first recovered herself. "Mr Percy," said she, endeavouring to speak

carelessly, "has given Ellen and me permission to go out for an hour."

"Yes," rejoined I hesitatingly, "Papa has given us leave, and we shall only stay a very little while."—Miss Mortimer made no answer. I stole a glance at her, and saw that she was pale as death. I ventured a step nearer to her. "You are not very angry with us," said I.

"No, Miss Percy," said she, in a low constrained voice; "I never claimed a right to dictate where you should or should not go. There was, therefore, on this occasion, the less necessity for having recourse to"—

She left the sentence unfinished; but my conscience filled up the pause. "Indeed, my dear Miss Mortimer," said I, for at that moment I was thoroughly humbled, "I never meant to go without your knowledge. Miss Arnold will tell you that we have been all day contriving how we should mention it to you."

"Your word did not use to need confirmation," said Miss Mortimer, sighing heavily. "I did hope," continued she, "that

you would have spared to me a part of this evening; for I have many things to say, and this is the last"—

Miss Mortimer stopped, cleared her throat, bit her quivering lip, and began industriously to arrange the drapery upon my shoulder; but all would not do,—she burst into tears. I could not withstand Miss Mortimer's emotion, and, throwing my arms round her neck,—"My dear, dear friend," I cried, "be angry with me, scold me as much as you will, only do not grieve yourself. If I could once have guessed that you were to be ill to-night, I should never have thought of this vile ball; and I am sure, if it will please you, I will send away the carriage, and stay at home still."

This proposal was perfectly sincere, but not very intelligible; for the thought of such a sacrifice overpowered me so completely, that the last words were choked with sobs. Miss Mortimer seemed at first to hesitate whether she should not accept of my offer; but, after a few moments reflection, "No Ellen," said she, "I will not cause you so cruel a disappointment;

for surely—surely this masquerade has seized upon a most disproportionate share of your wishes. You must soon be left to your own discretion; and why should I impose an unavailing hardship? Go then, my love, and be as happy as you can."

My heart leapt light at this concession. "Dear, good, kind Miss Mortimer," cried I, kissing her cheek, "do not be afraid of me. I assure you, I shall be more discreet and prudent this evening than ever I was in my life."

Miss Mortimer gave me an April smile. "This is not much like the garb of discretion," said she looking at my dress, which indeed approached the utmost limit of fashionable allurement. "It seems time that I should cease to advise, else I should beg of you to make some little addition to your dress. You may meet with people, even at a masquerade, who think that no charm can atone for any defect of modesty; and I should imagine, that your spirit would scarcely brook the remarks they might make."

"I am sure," said I, with a blush which

owed its birth as much to piqué as to shame, " I never thought of being immodest, nor of any thing else, except to look as well as I could; but if it will please you, I shall get a tucker, and let you cover me as much as you will."

Miss Mortimer good-naturedly accepted this little office; saying, while she performed it, " it is a good principle in dress, that the chief use of clothing is concealment. I am persuaded, that you would never offend in this point, were you to remember, that if ever an exposed figure pleases, it must be in some way in which no modest woman would wish to please."

Meanwhile Miss Arnold, who was even more impatient than myself to be gone, had ordered the carriage to the door. Miss Mortimer took leave of me with a seriousness of manner approaching to solemnity; and we departed. The moment we were alone, Juliet proposed to undo Miss Mortimer's labours, declaring that " they had quite made a fright of me." Fortunately for such a world as this, the most questionable principle may produce insulated acts

of propriety. My pride for once espoused the right side. "Forbear Juliet!" cried I indignantly. "Would you have people to look at me as they do at the very outcasts of womankind,—some with pity, some with scorn?"

Miss Arnold's "hour" had elapsed long before the concourse of carriages would allow us to alight at Lady St Edmunds' door. On my first entrance, I was so bewildered by the confusion of the scene, and the grotesque figures of the masks, that I could scarcely recognize the mistress of the revels, although we had previously concerted the dress which she was to wear. She presently, however, relieved this dilemma, by addressing me in character; though she was, or pretended to be, unable to penetrate my disguise. The tinge of seriousness which Miss Mortimer had left upon my spirits being aided by the alarm created by so many unsightly shapes, I determined not to quit Lady St Edmunds' side during the evening; and was just going to tell her my name in a whisper, when I was accosted by a Grand Signior, whom, in

spite of his disguise, I thought I discovered to be Lord Frederick de Burgh. I was somewhat surprised at this coincidence in our characters, as I had kept that in which I intended to appear, a profound secret from all but Miss Arnold, who protested that she had never breathed it to any human being. Lord Frederick however, for I was convinced that it was he, addressed me as a stranger; and, partly from the vanity of pleasing in a new character, I answered in the same strain. We were speedily engaged in a conversation, in the course of which a conviction of our previous acquaintance placed me so much at ease with my Turk, that I felt little disturbance, when, on looking round, I perceived that our matron had mingled with the crowd, leaving Miss Arnold and me to his protection. I proposed, however, to my friend, that we should go in search of Lady St Edmunds; and, still attended by our Grand Signior, we began our round.

And here let me honestly confess, that my pastime very poorly compensated the concealment, anxiety, and remorse which

it had already cost me. Even novelty, that idol of spoilt children, could scarcely defend me from weariness and disgust. In the more intellectual part of my anticipated amusement I was completely disappointed; for the attempts made to support character were few and feeble. The whole entertainment, for the sake of which I had broken my promise, implied, if not expressed,—for the sake of which I had given the finishing stroke to the unkindness, ingratitude, and contumacy of my behaviour towards my mother's friend,—amounted to nothing more than looking at a multitude of motely habits, for the most part mean, tawdry, and unbecoming; and listening to disjointed dialogues, consisting of dull questions and unmeaning answers, thinly bestrown with constrained witticisms, and puns half a century old. The easy flow of conversation, which makes even trifles pass agreeably, was destroyed by the supposed necessity of being smart; and the eloquence of the human eye, of the human smile, was wanting to add interest to what was vapid, and kindliness to what was witty. Lord Frederick,

indeed, did what he could to enliven the scene. He pointed out the persons whom he knew through their disguises; and desired me to observe how generally each affected the character which he found the least attainable in common life. "That," said he, "is Glendower in the dress of a conjurer. That virgin of the sun is Lady B———, whose divorce-bill is to be before the House to-morrow. That Minerva is Lady Maria de Burgh; and that figure next to her is Miss Sarah Winterfield, who has stuck a flaxen wig upon her grizzled pate that she may for once pass for a Venus."

"If I am to judge by your rule," said I, "you must be content to be taken for some Christian slave, snatching a transitory greatness."

"You guess well, fair Fatima; I am indeed a slave; and these royal robes are meant to conceal my chains from all but my lovely mistress."

"Why then do you confess them so freely to me?"

"Because I am persuaded that this en-

vious mask conceals the face of my sultana."

"No, no; by your rule I must be some stern old gouvernante, who have locked up your sultana, and come to seize the pleasures which I deny to her."

"Oh! here my rule is useless; for, from what I see, I can guess very correctly what is concealed. For instance, there is first a pair of saucy hazel eyes, sparkling through their long fringes. Cheeks of roses—"

"Pshaw! common-place—"

"Nay, not common vulgar country roses—but living and speaking, like the roses in a poet's fancy."

"Well, that's better, Go on."

"A sly, mischievous, dimple, that, Parthian like, kills and is fled."

"You can guess flatteringly, I see."

"Yes; and truly too. Nature would never mould a form like this, and leave her work imperfect; therefore there is but one face that can belong to it; and that face is—Miss Percy's."

"And I think nature would never have bestowed such talents for flattery without

giving a corresponding dauntlessness of countenance; and that I am persuaded belongs only to Lord Frederick de Burgh."

My attention was diverted from the Sultan's reply by a deep low voice, which, seemingly close to my ear, pronounced the words, "Use caution; you have need of it." I started, and turned to see who had spoken; but a crowd of masks were round us, and I could not distinguish the speaker. I applied to Miss Arnold and the Turk, but neither of them had observed the circumstance. I was rather inclined to ascribe it to chance, not conceiving that any one present could be interested in advising me; yet the solemn tone in which the words were uttered, uniting with the impression which, almost unknown to myself, Miss Mortimer's averseness to my present situation had left upon my mind, I again grew anxious to find protection with Lady St Edmunds.

Being now a little more in earnest in my search, I soon discovered the object of it, and I immediately made myself known to her. Lady St Edmunds appeared to receive the intelligence with delighted sur-

prise, and reproached me kindly with having concealed myself so long; then suddenly transferred her reproaches to herself for having, even for a moment, overlooked my identity, "since, however disguised, my figure remained as unique as that of the Medicean Venus." I can smile now at the simplicity with which I swallowed this and a hundred other absurdities of the same kind. A superior may always apply his flattery with very little caution, secure that it will be gratefully received; and the young are peculiarly liable to its influence, because their estimate of themselves being as yet but imperfectly formed, they are glad of any testimony on the pleasing side.

I kept my station for some time between Lady St Edmunds and Lord Frederick, drinking large draughts of vanity and pleasure, till Miss Mortimer and my unknown adviser were alike forgotten. A groupe of Spaniards having finished a fandango, the Countess proposed that Lord Frederick and I should succeed them in a Turkish dance. A faint recollection crossed my mind of

the disgust with which I had read a description of this Mahometan exhibition, so well suited to those whose prospective sensuality extends even beyond the grave. I refused, therefore, alleging ignorance as my excuse; but, as I had an absolute passion for dancing, I offered to join in any more common kind of my favourite exercise. Lady St Edmunds, however, insisted that, unless in character, it would be awkward to dance at all; and that I might easily copy the Turkish dances which I had seen performed upon the stage. These had, so far as I could see, no resemblance to the licentious spectacles of which I had read, excepting what consisted in the shameless attire of the performers, in which I sincerely believe that the *Christian* dancing-women have pre-eminence. Blessed be the providential arrangements which make the majority of woman-kind bow to the restraints of public opinion! Hardened depravity may despise them, piety may sacrifice them to a sense of duty: but, in the intermediate classes, they hold the place of wisdom and of virtue. They direct many a

judgment which ought not to rely on itself; they aid faltering rectitude with the strength of numbers; for, degenerate as we are, numbers are still upon the side of feminine decorum. Had I been unmasked, no earthly inducement would have made me consent to this blameable act of levity; but, in the intoxication of spirits which was caused by the adulation of my companions, the consciousness that I was unknown to all but my tempters induced me to yield, and I suffered Lord Frederick to lead me out. Yet, concealed as I fancied myself, I performed with a degree of embarrassment which must have precluded all grace; though this embarrassment only served to enhance the praises which were lavished on me by Lord Frederick.

When the dance was ended, and I was going eagerly to rejoin Lady St Edmunds, I looked round for her in vain; but Miss Arnold, with an acquaintance who had joined her, waited for me, and once more we set out in search of our erratic hostess. In the course of our progress, we passed a buffet spread with wines, ices, and

sherbets. Exhausted with the heat occasioned by the crowd, my mask, and the exercise I had just taken, I was going to swallow an ice; when Lord Frederick, vehemently dissuading me from so dangerous a refreshment, poured out a large glass of Champagne, and insisted upon my drinking it. I had raised it to my lips, when I again heard the same low solemn voice which had before addressed me. "Drink sparingly," it said, "the cup is poisoned." Looking hastily round, I thought I discovered that the warning came from a person in a black domino; but in his air and figure I could trace nothing which was familiar to my recollection. My thoughts, I know not why, glanced towards Mr Maitland; but there was no affinity whatever between his tall athletic figure, and the spare, bending, diminutive form of the black domino.

No metaphorical meaning occurring to my mind, the caution of the mask appeared so manifestly absurd, that I concluded it to be given in jest; and, with a careless smile, drank the liquor off. Through my previous

fatigue, it produced an immediate effect upon my spirits, which rose to an almost extravagant height. I rattled, laughed; and, but for the crowd, would have skipped along the chalked floors, as I again passed from room to room in quest of Lady St Edmunds. Our search, however, was vain. In none of the crowded apartments was Lady St Edmunds to be found.

In traversing one of the lobbies, we observed a closed door; Lord Frederick threw it open, and we entered, still followed by Miss Arnold and her companion. The room to which it led was splendidly furnished. Like the rest of those we had seen, it was lighted up, and supplied with elegant refreshments. But it was entirely unoccupied, and the fresh coolness of the air formed a delightful contrast to the loaded atmosphere which we had just quitted. Having shut out the crowd, Lord Frederick, throwing himself on the sofa by my side, advised me to lay aside my mask; and the relief was too agreeable to be rejected. He himself unmasked also, and, handsome as he always undoubtedly was,

I think I never saw him appear to such advantage. While Miss Arnold and her companion busied themselves in examining the drawings which hung round the room, Lord Frederick whispered in my ear a hundred flatteries, seasoned with that degree of passion, which, according to the humour of the hour, destroys all their power to please, or makes them doubly pleasing. If I know myself, I never felt the slightest spark of real affection for Lord Frederick; yet, whether it was that pleased vanity can sometimes take the form of inclination, or whether, to say all in Miss Mortimer's words, "having ventured upon the tempter's own ground, better spirits had forsaken me," I listened to my admirer with a favour different from any which I had ever before shewn him.

I even carried this folly so far as to suffer him to detain me after Miss Arnold and her companion had quitted the room, although I began to suspect that I could already discern the effects of the wine which, from time to time, he swallowed freely. Not that it appeared to affect his intellects; on the contrary, it seemed to inspire him

with eloquence ; for he pleaded his passion with increasing ardour, and pursued every advantage in my sportive opposition, with a subtlety which I had never suspected him of possessing. He came at length to the point of proposing an expedition to Scotland, urging it with a warmth and dexterity which I was puzzled how to evade. In this hour of folly, I mentally disposed of his request among the subjects which might deserve to be reconsidered. Meantime, I opposed the proposal with a playful resistance, which I intended should leave my sentence in suspence, but which I have since learnt to know that lovers prefer to more direct victory. Lord Frederick at first affected the raptures of a succcessful petitioner ; and though I contrived to set him right in this particular, his extravagance increased, till I began to wish for some less elevated companion. He was even in the act of attempting to snatch a kiss,—for a lord in the inspiration of Champagne is not many degrees more gentle or respectful than a clown,—when the door flew open, and admitted Lady Maria de

Burgh, Mrs Sarah Winterfield, and my black domino.

Our indiscretions never flash more strongly upon our view than when reflected from the eye of an enemy. All the impropriety of my situation bursting upon me at once, the blood rushed in boiling torrents to my face and neck; while Mrs Sarah, with a giggle, in which envy mingled with triumphant detection, exclaimed, "Bless my heart! we have interrupted a flirtation!" "A flirtation!" repeated Lady Maria, with a toss expressive of ineffable disdain; while I, for the first time, shrinking from her eye, stood burning with shame and anger. Lord Frederick's spirits were less fugitive— "Damn it!" cried he impatiently, "if either of you had a thousandth part of this lady's charms, you might expect a man sometimes to forget himself; but I'll answer for it, neither of you is in any danger. Forgive me, I beseech you dear Miss Percy," continued he, turning to me; "If you would not make me the most unhappy fellow in England, you must forgive me." But I was in no humour to be con-

ciliated by a compliment, even at the expence of Lady Maria. "Oh! certainly my lord," returned I, glancing from him to his sister ;" I can consider impertinence and presumption only as diseases which run in the family." I tried to laugh as I uttered this sally; but the effort failed, and I burst into tears.

Lord Frederick, now really disconcerted, endeavoured to sooth me by every means in his power; while the two goddesses stood viewing us with shrugs and sneers, and the black domino appeared to contemplate the scene with calm curiosity. More mortified than ever by my own imbecility, I turned from them all, uttering some impatient reflection on the inattention of my hostess. "She will not be so difficult of discovery *now*;" said the black domino sarcastically; "you will find her with your convenient friend in the great drawing-room. I followed the direction of my mysterious inspector, and found Lady St Edmunds, as he had said, in company with Miss Arnold.

Angrily reproaching my friend with her unseasonable desertion, and even betraying

some displeasure against the charming Countess, I announced my intention of returning home immediately. Lady St Edmunds endeavoured to dissuade me, but I was inflexible; and at last Lord Frederick, who still obsequiously attended me, offered to go and inquire for my carriage. "I commit my Sultana to you;" said he, with an odd kind of emphasis, to his aunt. She seemed fully inclined to accept the trust; for she assailed my ill-humour with such courteous submissions, such winning blandishments, such novel remark, and such amusing repartee, that, in spite of myself, I recovered both temper and spirits.

Such was the fascination which she could exercise at pleasure, that I scarcely observed the extraordinary length of time which Lord Frederick took to execute his mission. I was beginning, however, to wonder that he did not return, when I was once more accosted by the black domino. "Infatuated girl!" said he, in the low impressive whisper, to which I now began to listen with alarm, "Whether are you going?"

"Home," returned I, "where I wish that I had been an hour ago."

"Are you false as well as weak?" rejoined the mask. "You are not destined to see home this night."

"Not see home!" repeated I, with amazement. "What is it you mean,—or have you any meaning beyond a teazing jest?"

"I know," replied the mask, "that the carriage waits which conveys you to Scotland."

I started at the odd coincidence between the stranger's intelligence and my previous conversation with Lord Frederick. Yet a moment's consideration convinced me, that his behaviour either proceeded from waggery or mistake. "Get better information," said I, "before you commence fortune-teller. It is my father's carriage and servants that wait for me."

The mask shook his head, and retreated without answering. I inquired of Lady St Edmunds whether she knew him, but she was unacquainted with his appearance. I was just going to relate to her the strange

conversation which he had carried on with me in an under-voice, when Lord Frederick returned to tell me, that the carriage was at the door; adding, that he feared he must hasten me, lest it should be obliged to drive off. Hastily taking leave of Lady St Edmunds, Miss Arnold and I took each an arm of Lord Frederick, and hurried down stairs.

My foot was already on the step of the carriage, when I suddenly recoiled:—

"This is not our carriage!" cried I.

"It is mine, which is the same thing," said Lord Frederick.

"No, no! it is not the same," said I, with quickness; the warning of the black domino flashing on my recollection. "I should greatly prefer going in my own."

"I fear," returned Lord Frederick, "that it will be impossible for yours to come up in less than an hour or two."

I own, I felt some pleasure on hearing him interrupted by the voice of my strange adviser. "If Miss Percy will trust to me," said he, "I shall engage to place her in

her carriage, in one tenth part of that time."

"Trust you!" cried Lord Frederick very angrily.—"And who are you?"

"Miss Percy's guard for the present," answered the mask dryly.

"Her guard!" exclaimed Lord Frederick. "From whom?"

"From you, my Lord, if you make it necessary," retorted the stranger.

"Oh mercy," interrupted Miss Arnold, "here will be a quarrel,—do, for heaven's sake, Ellen, let us be gone."

"Do not alarm yourself, young lady," said the stranger, in a sarcastic tone; "the dispute will end very innocently. Miss Percy, let me lead you to your carriage; or, if you prefer remaining here while I go in search of it, for once shew yourself firm, and resist every attempt to entice you from this spot."

I embraced the latter alternative, and the stranger left us. The moment he was gone, Miss Arnold began to wonder who the impudent officious fellow could be, and to in-

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARA

quire whether we were to wait his pleasure in the lobby for the rest of the night. She protested her belief, that I had been infected by that precise old maid Miss Mortimer; and could by no means imagine what was my objection to Lord Frederick's carriage. I coldly persisted in preferring my own, though my suspicions were staggered by the readiness with which Lord Frederick appeared to acquiesce in my decision. Notwithstanding his impatience at the stranger's first interference, he now treated the matter so carelessly, that my doubts were fast giving ground, when the black domino returned, followed by one of my servants, who informed me that my carriage was now easily accessible.

Leaving Lord Frederick to Miss Arnold, I gave my hand to my mysterious guardian; and, curiosity mingling with a desire to shew some little return of civility, I inquired, whether he would allow me to set him down. The stranger declined; but, offering to escort me home, took his place by my side; giving orders to a servant in a plain

but handsome livery, that his chariot should follow him to Mr Percy's.

During our drive, I was occupied in endeavouring to discover the name of my unknown attendant, and the means by which he had gained his intelligence. Upon the first point he was utterly impracticable. Upon the second, he frankly declared, that, having no business at the masquerade, except to watch me and those with whom I appeared connected for the evening, he had, without difficulty, traced all our motions; but why he had chosen such an office, he refused to discover. When he again mentioned the intended expedition to Scotland, Miss Arnold averred that she was lost in astonishment, and asserted her utter incredulity. I too expressed my doubts; alleging, that Lord Frederick could not believe me weak enough to acquiesce in such an outrage. "As I have not the honour of Miss Percy's acquaintance," returned the stranger dryly, "I cannot determine, whether a specious flatterer had reason to despair of reconciling her to a breach of propriety." The glow

of offended pride rose to my cheek; but the carriage stopped, and I had not time to reply; for the stranger instantly took his leave.

As soon as he was gone, Miss Arnold grew more fervent in her expressions of wonder at his strange conduct, and his more strange discovery, of which she repeated her entire disbelief. I had no defined suspicion of my friend, nor even any conviction of Lord Frederick's intended treachery; but I perceived that there was something in the events of the night which I could not unravel; and, weary and bewildered, I listened to her without reply.

We were about to separate for the night, when a servant brought me a note which, he said, he had found in the bottom of the carriage. It was not mine; it belonged to the stranger. "Oh now!" cried Miss Arnold, eagerly advancing to look at it, "we shall discover the mystery." But I was not in a communicative humour; so, putting the note in my pocket, I bade her good night more coldly than I had ever done before, and retired to my chamber.

The note was addressed to a person known to me only by character; but one whose name commands the respect of the wise, and the love of the virtuous. The hand-writing, I thought, was that of Mr Maitland. This circumstance strongly excited my curiosity. But, could I take a base advantage of the accident which empowered me to examine a paper never meant for my inspection? The thing was not to be thought of; and I turned my reflections to the events of the evening.

Nothing agreeable attended the retrospect. Conscience, an after-wise counsellor, upbraided me with the futility of that pleasure which I had purchased at the price of offending my own friend, and my mother's friend. The temptation which in its approach had allured me with the forms of life and joy, had passed by; and, to the backward glance, seemed all lifeless and loathsome. Unknown and concealed, I had failed to attract the attention which was now becoming customary to me. Lady St Edmunds, whose society had been my chief attraction to this ill-fated masquerade, had

appeared rather to shun than to seek me. Above all, the indecorous situation in which I had been surprised by Lady Maria, and the aspect which her malice might give to my indiscretion, haunted me, like an evil genius, meeting my " mind's eye" at every turn.

I was glad to revert from these tormenting thoughts, to my speculations concerning the black domino. I was unable to divine the motive which could induce a stranger to interest himself in my conduct. I fancied, indeed, that I recognized Mr Maitland's hand-writing; and thought for a moment that he might have instigated my mysterious protector. But what concern had Mr Maitland in my behaviour? What interest could I possibly have excited in the composed, stately, impracticable Mr Maitland? Besides, I was neither sure that he really was the writer of the note, nor that its contents had any reference to me. I again carefully examined the address, but still I remained in doubt. There could be no *great* harm, I thought, in looking merely at the signature. I threw the cautious glance

of guilt round the room, and then ventured to convince myself. Before I could restore the note to its folds, I had undesignedly read a few words which roused my eager curiosity. Almost unconscious of what I was doing, I finished the sentence which contained them.

Those who are accustomed to watch the progress of temptation, will be at no loss to guess the issue of this ominous first step. Had I been earnest in my resolution to pursue the right path, I ought to have put it out of my own power to choose the wrong. As it was, I first wished—then doubted—hesitated—ventured—and ventured farther—till there was nothing left for curiosity to desire, or honour to forego. The note was as follows:

"My dear Sir,—Our worthy friend Miss
"Mortimer, has just now sent to beg that I
"will follow her young charge to Lady St
"E.'s masked-ball, whither she has been de-
"coyed by that unprincipled woman. I fear
"there is some sinister purpose against this
"poor thoughtless girl. But it is impossible

" for me to go. The great cause which I am
" engaged to plead to-morrow, must not be
" postponed to any personal consideration.
" Will you then undertake the office which
" I must refuse? Will you watch over the
" safety of this strange being, who needs an
" excuse every moment, and finds one in
" every heart? She must not, and shall not
" be entrapped by that heartless Lord F.
" He cannot love her. He may covet her
" fortune—perhaps her person too, as he
" would covet any other fashionable gew-
" gaw; but he is safe from the witchery of
" her *naif* sensibility, her lovely singleness
" of mind. I inclose the description which
" has been sent me of her dress. Should
" another wear one similar, you will distin-
" guish Miss Percy by a peculiar elegance
" of air and motion. She is certainly the
" most graceful of women. Or you may
" know her by the inimitable beauty of her
" arm. I once saw it thrown round her fa-
" ther's neck. My dear friend, if you are
" not most particularly engaged, lose not a
" moment. She is already among these de-
" signing people. I have told you that I am

"interested in her, for the sake of Miss
"Mortimer; but I did not express half
"the interest I feel.

"Yours faithfully,

"H. Maitland."

In spite of the checks of conscience, I read this billet with exultation. I skipped before my looking-glass; and, tossing back the long tresses which I had let fall on my shoulders, surveyed with no small complacency the charms which were acknowledged by the stoical Mr Maitland. Then I again glanced over some of his expressions, wondering what kind of interest it was that he had "left half told." Was it love? thought I. But when I recollected his general manner towards me, I was, in spite of vanity and the billet, obliged to doubt. I resolved, however, to ascertain the point; "and if he be really caught," thought I, "what glorious revenge will I take for all his little sly sarcasms." To play off a fool was nothing; that I could do every day. But the grave, wise Mr Maitland would be so divertingly miserable, that I

was in raptures at the prospect of my future amusement.

Along with this inundation of vanity, however, came its faithful attendant, vexation of spirit. I could not doubt, that the domino would report to his employer the events of the evening. I knew that Mr Maitland's notions of feminine decorum were particularly strict; and I felt almost as much chagrined by the thought of his being made acquainted with the real extent of my indiscretion, as by the prospect of the form which it might take in the world's eye under the colouring of Lady Maria's malice. Harassed with fatigue, my mind tossed between self-accusings, disappointment, curiosity, and mortification, I passed a restless night; nor was it till late in the morning that I fell into a feverish, unquiet slumber.

CHAP. X.

> Think you the soul, when this life's rattles cease,
> Has nothing of more manly to succeed!
> Contract the taste immortal. Learn e'en now
> To relish what alone subsists hereafter.
>
> YOUNG.

THE next morning, on entering the breakfast parlour, the first object which met my eye was Miss Mortimer, in a travelling dress. Notwithstanding our conversation on the preceding day, the consciousness of having done amiss made me ascribe her departure, or at least the suddenness of it, to displeasure against me; and, "soon moved with touch of blame," I would not deign to notice the circumstance, but took my place at the breakfast-table in surly silence. Our meal passed gloomily enough. I sat trying to convince myself that Miss

Mortimer was unreasonably offended; my father wrinkled his dark brows till his eyes were scarcely visible; Miss Arnold fidgeted upon her chair; and Miss Mortimer bent over her untasted chocolate, stealing up her fingers now and then to arrest the tear ere it reached her cheek.

"Truly Miss Mortimer," said my father at last, "I must say I think it a little strange that you should leave us so suddenly, before we have had time to provide a person to be with Ellen." This speech, or the manner in which it was spoken, roused Miss Mortimer; for she answered with a degree of spirit which broke upon the meekness of her usual manner like summer lightning on the twilight. "While I had a hope of being useful to Miss Percy," said she, "I was willing to doubt of the necessity for leaving her; but every such hope must end since it is judged advisable to use concealment with me. Besides, I am now fully aware of my situation. Dr —— has told me that any delay will be fatal to all chance of success."

"Well," said my father, "every one is

the best judge of his own affairs; but my opinion is that you had better have staid where you are. You might have had my family surgeon to attend you when you chose, without expence. I take it your accommodations would have been somewhat different from what you can have in that confined hovel of yours."

Miss Mortimer shook her head. "I cannot doubt your liberality Sir," said she; "but the very name of home compensates many a want; and I find it is doubly dear to the sick and the dying."

Miss Mortimer's last words, and the sound of her carriage as it drove to the door, brought our comfortless meal to a close; and, in a mood between sorrow and anger, I retreated to a window, where I stood gazing as steadfastly into the street, as if I had really observed what was passing there. I did not venture to look round while I listened to Miss Mortimer's last farewell to my father; and I averted my face still more when she drew near and took the hand which hung listless by my

side. "Ellen," said her sweet plaintive voice, "shall we not part friends?"

I would have given the universe at that moment for the obduracy to utter a careless answer; but it was impossible:—so I stretched my neck as if to watch somewhat at the farther end of the street, though in truth my eyes were dim with tears more bitter than those of sorrow. Miss Mortimer for a while stood by me silent, and when she spoke, her voice was broken with emotion. "Perhaps we may meet again," whispered she, "if I live, perhaps.—I know it is in vain to tell you now that you are leaning on a broken reed; but if it should pierce you—if worldly pleasures fail you—if you should ever long for the sympathy of a faithful heart, will you think of me, Ellen? Will you remember your natural, unalienable right over her whom your mother loved and trusted?"

I answered not. Indeed I could not answer. My father and Miss Arnold were present; and, in the cowardice of pride, I could not dare the humiliation of exposing to them the better feeling which swelled

my heart to bursting. I snatched my hand from the grasp of my friend—my only real friend,—darted from her presence, and shut myself up alone.

By mere accident the place of my refuge was my mother's parlour. All was there as she had left it; for when the other apartments were new modelled to the fashion of the day, I had rescued hers from change. There lay the drawing-case where she had sketched flowers for me. There was the work-box where I had ravelled her silks unchidden. There stood the footstool on which I used to sit at her feet; and there stood the couch on which at last the lovely shadow leaned, when she was wasting away from our sight. "Oh mother, mother!" I cried aloud, "mother who loved me so fondly, who succoured me with thy life! is this my gratitude for all thy love! Thou hadst one friend, one dear and true to thee; and I have slighted, abused, driven her from me, sick and dying! Oh why didst thou cast away thy precious life for such a heartless, thankless thing as I am."

My well-deserved self-reproach was in-

terrupted by something that touched me. It was poor Fido; who, laying his paw upon my knee, looked up in my face, and gave a short low whine, as if inquiring what ailed me? "Fido! poor Fido!" said I, "what right have I to you—you should have been Miss Mortimer's. She would not misuse even a dog of my mother's. Go, go!" I continued, as the poor creature still fawned on me, "all kindness is lost upon *me*. —Miss Mortimer better deserves to have the only living memorial of her friend."

The parting steps of my neglected monitress now sounded on my ear as she passed to the carriage; and, catching my little favourite up in my arms, I sprang towards the door. "I will bid her keep him for my mother's sake," thought I, "and ask her too, for my mother's sake, to pardon me." My hand was on the lock when I heard Miss Arnold's voice, uttering, unmoved, a cold parting compliment; and I was not yet sufficiently humbled to let her witness my humiliation. I did not dare to meet the stoical scrutiny of her eye, and hastily retreated from the door. After a moment's

hesitation I pulled the bell, and a servant came, "Take that dog to Miss Mortimer," said I, turning away to hide my swollen eyes, "and tell her I beg as a particular favour that she will carry him away with her—he has grown intolerably troublesome." The man stood staring in inquisitive surprise; for all the household knew that Fido was my passion. "Why don't you do as you are desired?" cried I, impatiently. The servant disappeared with my favourite; I listened till I heard the carriage drive off; then threw myself on my mother's couch, and wept bitterly.

But the dispositions which mingled with my sorrow, foreboded its transient duration. My faults stood before me as frightful apparitions,—objects of terror, not of examination; and I hastened to shut them from my offended sight. I quickly turned from reproaching my own persevering rejection of Miss Mortimer's counsels, to blame her method of counselling. Why would she always take such a timid circuitous way of advising me? If she had told me directly that she suspected Lord Frederick

of wishing to entrap me at that odious masquerade, I was sure that I should have consented to stay at home; and I repeated to myself again and again, that I was sure I should,—as we sometimes do in our soliloquies, when we are not quite so sure as we wish to be.

Glad to turn my thoughts from a channel in which nothing pleasurable was to be found, I now reverted to the incidents of the former evening. But there, too, all was comfortless or obscure. The situation in which I had been surprized by Lady Maria was gall and wormwood to my recollection. I could neither endure nor forbear to anticipate the form which the ingenuity of hatred might give to the story of my indiscretion; and, while I pictured myself already the object of sly sarcasm,—of direct reproach,—of insulting pity,—every vein throbbed feverishly with proud impatience of disgrace, and redoubled hatred of my enemy. In the tumult of my thoughts, a wish crossed my mind, that I had once sheltered myself from calumny, and inflicted vengeance on my foe, by

consenting to accompany Lord Frederick to Scotland; but this was only the thought of a moment; and the next I relieved my mind from the crowd of tormenting images which pressed upon it, by considering whether my lover had really meditated a bold experiment upon my pliability, or whether my masquerade friend had been mistaken in his intelligence. Finding myself unable to solve this question, I went to seek the assistance of Miss Arnold. I was told she was abroad; and, after wondering a little whither she could have gone without acquainting me, I ordered the carriage; and went to escape from my doubts, and from myself, by a consultation with Lady St Edmunds.

Her ladyship's servant seemed at first little inclined to admit me; but, observing that a hackney coach moved from the door to let my barouche draw up, I concluded that my friend was at home, and resolutely made my way into the house. The servant, seeing me determined, ushered me into a back drawing-room; where, after waiting some time, I was joined by Lady St Ed-

munds. She never received me with more seeming kindness. She regretted having been detained from me so long; wondered at the stupidity of her domestics in denying her at any time to me; and thanked me most cordially for having made good my entrance. In the course of our conversation, I related, so far as it was known to me, the whole story of the mask; and ended by asking her opinion of the affair. She listened to my tale with every appearance of curiosity and interest; and, when I paused for a reply, declared, without hesitation, that she considered the whole interference and behaviour of my strange protector as a jest. I opposed this opinion, and Lady St Edmunds defended it; till I inadvertently confessed that I had private reasons for believing him to be perfectly serious. Her Ladyship's countenance now expressed a lively curiosity, but I was too much ashamed of my "private reasons" to acknowledge them; and she was either too polite to urge me, or confident of gaining the desired information by less direct means.

Finding me assured upon this point, she

averred, that the information given by my black domino, if not meant in jest, must at least have originated in mistake. "These prying geniuses," said she, "will always find a mystery, or make one. But of this I am sure, Frederick has too much of your own open undesigning temper to entrap you; even though," added she with a sly smile, "he were wholly without hopes from persuasion." I was defending myself in some confusion from this attack, when Lady St Edmunds interrupted me by crying out, "Oh I can guess now how this mystery of yours has been manufactured! I have this moment recollected that Frederick intended setting out early this morning for Lincolnshire. Probably he might go the first stage in the carriage which took him home from the ball; and your black domino having discovered this circumstance, has knowingly worked it up into a little romance."

Glad to escape from the uneasiness of suspicion, and perhaps from the necessity of increasing my circumspection, I eagerly laid hold on this explanation, and de-

clared myself perfectly satisfied; but Lady St Edmunds, who seemed anxious to make my conviction as complete as possible, insisted on dispatching a messenger to inquire into her nephew's motions.

She left the room for this purpose; and I almost unconsciously began to turn over some visiting cards which were strewed on her table. One of them bore Miss Arnold's name, underneath which this sentence was written in French: "Admit me for five minutes; I have something particular to say." These words were pencilled, and so carelessly, that I was not absolutely certain of their being Miss Arnold's hand-writing. I was still examining this point when Lady St Edmunds returned; and, quite unsuspectingly, I shewed her the card; asking her smiling, "What was this deep mystery of Juliet's?"

"That," said Lady St Edmunds,—"Oh, that was—a—let me see—upon my word, I have forgotten what it was—a consultation about a cap, or a feather, or some such important affair—I suppose it has lain on that table these six months."

"Six months," repeated I simply. "I did not know that you had been so long acquainted."

"How amusingly precise you are!" cried Lady St Edmunds, laughing. "I did not mean to say exactly six times twenty-nine days and six hours, but merely that the story is so old that I have not the least recollection of the matter."

She then immediately changed the subject. With a countenance full of concern, and with apologies for the liberty she took, she begged that I would enable her to contradict a malicious tale which, she said, Lady Maria de Burgh had, after I left the masquerade, half-hinted, half-told, to almost every member of the company. Ready to weep with vexation, I was obliged to confess that the tale was not wholly unfounded; and I related the affair as it had really happened. Lady St Edmunds lifted her hands and eyes, ejaculating upon the effects of malice and envy in such a manner, as convinced me that my indiscretion had deen dreadfully aggravated in the narration; but when I pressed to know the

particulars, she drew back, as if unwilling to wound me further, and even affected to make light of the whole affair. She declared that, being now acquainted with the truth, she should find it very easy to defend me,—"At all events," added she, "considering the terms on which you and Frederick stand with each other, nobody, except an old prude or two, will think the matter worth mentioning." I was going to protest against this ground of acquittal, when the servant came to inform his mistress aloud, that Lord Frederick had set out for Lincolnshire at five o'clock that morning. This confirmation of Lady St Edmunds' conjecture entirely removed my suspicions; and convinced me, that my black domino, having executed his commission with more zeal than discernment, had utterly mistaken Lord Frederick's intentions.

Some other visitors being now admitted, I left Lady St Edmunds, and ordered my carriage home, intending to take up Miss Arnold before I began my usual morning rounds. At the corner of Bond Street, the

overturn of a heavy coal-waggon had occasioned considerable interruption; and, while one line of carriages passed cautiously on, another was entirely stopped. My dexterous coachman, experienced in surmounting that sort of difficulty, contrived to dash into the moving line. As we slowly passed along, I thought I heard Miss Arnold's voice. She was urging the driver of a hackney-coach to proceed, while he surlily declared, "that he would not break his line and have his wheels torn off to please anybody." The coach had in its better days been the property of an acquaintance of mine, whose arms were still blazoned on the pannel; and this circumstance made me distinctly remember, that it was the same which I had seen that morning at Lady St Edmunds' door.

On observing me, Miss Arnold at first drew back; but presently afterwards looked out, and nodding familiarly, made a sign for me to stop and take her into my barouche. I obeyed the signal; but not, I must own, with that cordial good-will which usually impelled me towards Miss Arnold,

My friend's manner, however, did not partake of the restraint of mine. To my cold inquiry, "where she had been," she answered, with ready frankness, that she had been looking at spring silks in a shop at the end of the street. In spite of the manner in which this assertion was made, I must own that I was not entirely satisfied of its truth. The incident of the hackney-coach, and the words which I had seen written on the card, recurring together to my mind, I could not help suspecting that Miss Arnold had paid Lady St Edmunds a visit which was intended to be kept secret from me. Already out of humour, and dispirited, I admitted this suspicion with unwonted readiness; and, after conjecturing for some moments of surly silence, what could be the motive of this little circumvention, I bluntly asked my friend, whether she had not been in Grosvenor Square that morning?

Miss Arnold reddened. "In Grosvenor Square," repeated she. "What should make you think so?"

"Because the very carriage from which

you have just alighted, I saw at Lady St Edmunds' door not half an hour ago."

"Very likely," retorted my friend, "but you did not see me in it, I suppose."

I owned that I did not, but mentioned the card, which was connected with it in my mind; confessing, however, simply enough, that Lady St Edmunds denied all recollection of it. Miss Arnold now raised her handkerchief to her eyes. "Unkind Ellen!" said she, "what is it you suspect? Why should I visit Lady St Edmunds without your knowledge? But, since yesterday, you are entirely changed,—and after seven years of faithful friendship ——." She stopped, and turned from me as if to weep.

I was uneasy, but not sufficiently so to make concessions. "If my manner is altered Juliet," said I, "you well know the cause of the change. Was it not owing to you that I was so absurdly committed to the malice of that hateful Lady Maria? And now, there is I know not what of mystery in your proceedings that puts me quite out of patience."

"Yes, well I know the cause," answer-

ed Miss Arnold, as if still in tears. "Your generous nature would never have punished so severely an error of mere thoughtlessness, if that cruel Miss Mortimer had not prejudiced you against me. She is gone indeed herself; but she has left her sting behind. And I must go too!" continued Miss Arnold, sobbing more violently. "I could have borne any thing, except to be suspected."

My ungoverned temper often led me to inflict pain, which, with a selfishness sometimes miscalled good nature, I could not endure to witness. Entirely vanquished by the tears of my friend, I locked my arms round her neck, assured her of my restored confidence; and, as friends of my sex and age are accustomed to do, offered amends for my transient estrangement in a manner more natural than wise, by recanting aloud every suspicion, however momentary, which had formerly crossed my mind. A person of much less forecast than Miss Arnold might have learnt from this recantation where to place her guards for the future.

My friend heard me to an end, and then

with great candour confessed, what she could not now conceal, that Lord Frederick had her wishes for his success; but she magnanimously forgave my imagining, even for a moment, that she could condescend to assist him; and appealed to myself, what motive she could have for favouring his suit, except the wish of seeing me rise to a rank worthy of me. She then justified herself from any clandestine transaction with Lady St Edmunds, giving me some very unimportant explanation of the card which had perplexed me.

It is so painful to suspect a friend, and I was so accustomed to shun pain by all possible means, that I willingly suffered myself to be convinced; and harmony being restored by Miss Arnold's address, we engaged ourselves in shopping and visiting till it was time to prepare for the pleasures of the night. My spirits were low, and my head ached violently; but I had not the fortitude to venture upon a solitary evening. From the dread of successful malice,—from the recollection of abused friendship,—in a word, from myself,—I fled, vainly fled, to

the opera, and three parties; from whence I returned home, more languid and comfortless than ever.

I had just retired to my apartment, when a letter was brought me which Miss Mortimer had left, with orders that it might be delivered when I retired for the night. "Oh mercy!" cried I, "was I not wretched enough without this new torment? But give it me. She has some right to make me miserable." In this spirit of penance I dismissed my maid, and began to read my letter, which run as follows:

"When you read this letter, my dear El-
"len, one circumstance may perhaps assist
"its influence. My counsels, however re-
"ceived, whether used or rejected, are now
"drawing to a close; and you may safely
"grant them the indulgence we allow to
"troubles which will soon cease to molest
"us. I know not how far this considera-
"tion may affect you, but I cannot think of
"it without strong emotion. I have often
"and deeply regretted that my usefulness
"to you has been so little answerable to

" my wishes; yet, with the sympathy which " rivets our eyes on danger which we can- " not avert, I would fain have lingered with " you still; watching, with the same pain- " ful solicitude, the approach of evils, which " I in vain implored you to avoid. But it " must not be. Aware of my situation, I " dare not trifle with a life which is not " mine to throw away. I must leave you, " my dearest child, probably for ever. I " must loosen this last hold which the world " has on a heart already severed from all " its earliest affections. And can I quit " you without one last effort for your safe- " ty;—without once again earnestly striv- " ing to rouse your watchfulness, ere you " have cast away your all for trifles with- " out use or value?

" Ellen, your mother was my first friend. " We grew up together. We shared in com- " mon the sports and the improvements of " youth; and common sorrows, in maturer " life, formed a still stronger bond. Yet I " know not if my friend herself awakened a " tenderness so touching, as that which re- " membrance mingles with my affection for

" you, when your voice or your smile re-
" minds me of what she was in her short
" years of youth and joy. Nor is it only
" in trifles such as these that the resemblance
" rises to endear you. You have your mo-
" ther's simplicity and truth,—your mother's
" warm affections,—your mother's implicit
" confidence in the objects of her love. This
" last was indeed the shade, perhaps the on-
" ly shade of her character. But she posses-
" sed that ' alchemy divine' which could
" transform even her dross into gold; and
" what might have been her weakness be-
" came her strength, when she placed her
" supreme regards upon excellence supreme.
" The nature of your affections also seems to
" give their object, whatever it be, implicit
" influence with you; and thus it becomes
" doubly important that they be worthily
" bestowed. It is this which has made me
" watch, with peculiar anxiety, the channels
" in which they seemed inclined to flow; and
" lament, with peculiar bitterness, that a
" propensity capable of such glorious appli-
" cation should be lost, or worse than lost
" to you.

" These, however, are subjects upon " which you have never permitted me to " enter. You have repelled them in anger; " evaded them in sport; or barred them at " once as points upon which you were de- " termined to act, I must not say to judge, " for yourself. If, indeed, you would have " used your own judgment, one unpleasing " part of this letter might have been spared; " for surely your unbiassed judgment might " shew you the danger of some connections " into which you have entered. It might re- " mind you, that the shafts of calumny are " seldom so accurately directed, as not to " glance aside from their chief mark to " those who incautiously approach; that " those whom it has once justly or unjustly " suspected, the world views with an eye so " jaundiced as may discolour even the most " innocent action of their willing associate. " Even upon these grounds I think your " judgment, had it been consulted, must have " given sentence against your intimacy with " Lady St Edmunds. But these are not all. " Persons who know her ladyship better " than I pretend to do, represent her as a

" mixture, more common than amiable, of
" improvidence in the selection of her ends,
" with freedom in the choice, and dexterity
" in the use of the means which, she em-
" ploys; in short, (pardon the severity of
" truth,) as a mixture of imprudence and ar-
" tifice. My dearest girl, what variety of
" evil may not result to you from such a
" connection! Whatever may be my suspi-
" cions, I am not prepared to assert that
" Lady St Edmunds has any sinister design
" against you. Your manifest indifference
" towards her nephew, makes me feel more
" security on the point where I should
" otherwise have dreaded her influence the
" most. But I am convinced, that the mere
" love of manœuvring becomes in itself a
" sufficient motive for intrigue, and is of
" itself sufficient to endanger the safety of
" all who venture within its sphere. The
" frank and open usually possess an instinct
" which, independently of caution, repels
" them from the designing. I must not
" name to you that unhappy trait in your
" character, by which this instinct has been
" made unavailing to you; by which the

" artful wind themselves into your confi-
" dence, and the heartless cheat you of
" your affection. Has not the ceaseless in-
" cense which Miss Arnold offers blinded
" you to faults, which far less talent for ob-
" servation than you possess might have
" exposed to your knowledge and to your
" disdain. Do not throw aside my letter
" with indignation; but, if the words of
" truth offend you, consider that from me
" they will wound you no more; and par-
" don me, too, when I confess, that, in de-
" spair of influencing you upon this point,
" I have entreated your father not to renew
" his invitation to Miss Arnold, but rather
" to discourage, by every gentle and reason-
" able means, an intimacy so eminently
" prejudicial to you.

" And now I think I see you raise your
" indignant head; and, with the lofty scorn
" of baseness which I have so often seen
" expressed in your countenance and mien,
" I hear you exclaim, 'Shall I desert my
" earliest friend!—repay with cold ingrati-
" tude her long-tried, ardent attachment?'
" Your indignation, Ellen, is virtuous, but

“ mistaken. If Miss Arnold's attachment “ be real, she has a claim to your gratitude, “ indeed; but not to your intimacy, your “ confidence, your imitation. These are “ due to far other qualifications. But are “ you sure, Ellen, that the warm return “ you make to Miss Arnold's supposed af- “ fection, is itself entirely real? Are you “ sure, that it is not rather the form under “ which you choose to conceal from your- “ self, that her adulation is become neces- “ sary to you? Before you indignantly re- “ pel this charge, ask your own heart, whe- “ ther you are, in every instance, thus grate- “ ful for disinterested love? Is there not a “ friend of whose love you are regardless?— “ whose counsels you neglect?—whose pre- “ sence you shun?—from whom you with- “ hold your trust, though the highest confi- “ dence were here the highest wisdom?— “ whom you refuse to imitate, though here “ the most imperfect imitation were glori- “ ous? You exchange your affection, and “ all the influence which your affection be- “ stows, for a mere shadow of good-will. “ The very dog that fawns upon you, is ca-

" ressed with childish fondness. Oh, Ellen,
" does it never strike you with strong a-
" mazement to reflect, that you are sensible
" to every love but that which is bound-
" less! grateful for every kindness but that
" which is wholly undeserved—wholly be-
" yond return! Is nothing due to an un-
" wearied friend? Is it fitting, that one who
" lives, who enjoys so much to sweeten life,
" by the providence, the bounty, the for-
" bearance of a benefactor, should live to
" herself alone? Yet ask your own con-
" science, what part of your plan of life, or
" rather, since I believe your life is without
" a plan, which of your habits is inspired
" by gratitude. Dare to be candid with
" yourself, and though the odious word will
" grate upon your ear, inquire whether sel-
" fishness be not rather your chosen guide;
" —whether you be not selfish in your pur-
" suit of pleasure,—selfish in your fondness
" for the flatterer who sooths your vanity,—
" selfish in the profuse liberality with which
" you vainly hope to purchase an affection
" which it is not in her nature to bestow,—
" selfish even in the relief which you in-

" discriminately lavish on every complain-
" er whose cry disturbs you on your bed
" of roses. Is this the temper of a Christ-
" ian—of one ' who is not her own, but is
" bought with a price?' Consider this aw-
" ful price, and how will your own conduct
" change in your estimation! How will you
" start as from a fearful dream, when you
" remember, that of this mighty debt you
" have hitherto lived regardless! How will
" you then abhor that pursuit of selfish
" pleasure which has hitherto alienated your
" mind from all that best deserves your
" care,—blasted the very sense by which
" you should have perceived the excellence
" of your benefactor,—diverted your regards
" from the deeper and deeper death which
" is palsying your soul; and closed your
" ear against the renovating voice which
" calls you to arise and live. This voice,
" once heard, would exalt your confiding
" temper to the elevations of faith—ennoble
" your careless generosity to the self-devo-
" tion of saints and martyrs,—your warmth
" of affection, now squandered on the mean-
" est of objects, to the love of God. The

" true religion once received, would change " the whole current of your hopes and fears; " —would ennoble your desires, subdue " passion, humble the proud heart, over- " come the world. But you will not give " her whereon to plant her foot; for where, " amidst the multitude of your toys, shall re- " ligion find a place? Oh, why should we, " by continual sacrifice, confirm our natu- " ral idolatry of created things! Why fill, " with the veriest baubles of this unsub- " stantial scene, hearts already too much in- " clined to exclude their rightful possessor; " The pursuit of selfish pleasure is indeed " natural, for self is the idol of fallen man; " but the great end of his present state of " being is to prostrate that idol before the " Supreme. The stony Dagon bows unwil- " lingly, but bow he must. Our heavenly " Father, though a merciful, is not a fond or " partial parent; and the same lot is more or " less the portion of us all. He has freely " given. He has done more; he has warned " us of the real uses of his gifts. Perverse " by nature, we abuse his bounty. Again, " he exhorts us by the ministry of his

" servants; and often graciously sweetens " his warnings, by conveying them in the " voice of partial friendship, or parental " love. We reject counsel; and the father " unwillingly chastises. He withdraws the " gifts which we have perverted, or suffers " them to become themselves the punish- " ment of their own abuse. If kindness can- " not touch, nor exhortation move, nor warn- " ing alarm, nor chastisement reclaim, what " other means can be employed with a " moral being? What remains but the fear- " ful sentence, 'he is joined to his idols; " let him alone.' Oh, Ellen, my blood " freezes at the thought that such a sen- " tence may ever go forth against you. " Rouse you, dear child of my love,—rouse " you from your ill-boding security. Trem- " ble, lest you already approach that state " where mercy itself assumes the form of " punishment. You have hitherto lived to " yourself alone. Now venture to examine " this god of your idolatry;—for the being " whose pleasure and whose honour you " seek, is your god, call it by what name " you will. See if it be worthy to divide

"even your least service with Him who, "infinite in goodness, accepts the imper- "fect,—showers his bounty on the unpro- "fitable,—and opens, even to the rebel, the "arms of a father!—who meets your of- "fences with undesired pardon, and antici- "pates your wants with offers of himself! "Think you that this generous love could "lay on you a galling yoke? I know that, "though you should distrust my judg- "ment, you will credit my testimony; and "I solemnly protest to you, that I have "found his service to be 'perfect free- "dom.' He exalts my joys as gifts of his "bounty; He blesses my sorrows as to- "kens of his love; He lightens my duties "by honouring them, poor as they are, "with his acceptance; and even the pang "with which I feel and own myself a lost "sinner, is sweetened by remembrance of "that mercy which came to seek and to "save me, *because* I was lost. These are "my pleasures; and I know that they can "counterbalance poverty, and loneliness, "and pain. Your pleasures too I have "tried; and I know them to be cold, fleet-

" ing, and unsubstantial, as the glories of a
" winter sky. Oh for the eloquence of an-
" gels, that I might persuade you to ex-
" change them for the real treasure! Yet
" vain were the eloquence of angels, if
" the 'still small voice' be wanting, which
" alone can speak to the heart. I may
" plead, and testify, and entreat; but is
" aught else within my power?—Yes,—I
" will go and pray for you.

" E. MORTIMER."

CHAP. XI.

He had the skill, when cunning's gaze would seek
To probe his heart, and watch his changing cheek,
At once the observer's purpose to espy,
And on himself roll back his scrutiny.

Lord Byron.

My friend's letter cost me a whole night's repose. I could not read without emotion the expressions of an affection so ill repaid,—an affection now lost to me for ever. A thousand instances of my ingratitude forced themselves upon my recollection; and who can tell the bitterness of that pity which we feel for those whom we have injured, when we know that our pity can no longer avail! The mild form of Miss Mortimer perpetually rose to my fancy. I saw her alone in her solitary dwelling, suffering

pain which was unsoothed by the voice of sympathy, and weakness which no friend was at hand to sustain. I saw her weep over the wounds of my unkindness, and bless me, though " the iron had entered into her soul !" " But she shall not weep,— she shall not be alone and comfortless," I cried, starting like one who has taken a sudden resolution : " I will go to her. I will shew her, that I am not altogether thankless. I will spend whole days with her. I will read to her,—sing to her,—amuse her a thousand ways. To-morrow I will go—no—to-morrow I am engaged at Lady G.'s,—how provoking ! and the day after, we must dine with Mrs Sidney,—was ever any thing so unfortunate ! However, some day soon I will most certainly go." So with this opiate I lulled the most painful of my self-upbraidings.

That part of the letter which related to my chosen associates, was not immediately dismissed from my mind. Had no accident awakened my suspicions, I should have indignantly rejected my friend's insinuations, or despised them as the senti-

ments of a narrow-minded though well-intentioned person; but now, my own observation coming in aid of her remonstrances, I was obliged to own that they were not wholly unfounded. I received them, however, as a *bon vivant* does the advice of his physician. He is told that temperance is necessary; and he assents, reserving the liberty of explaining the term. I was convinced that it was advisable to restrain my intimacy with Lady St Edmunds; I resolved to be less frank in communicating my sentiments, less open in regard to my affairs; and this resolution held, till the next time it was exposed to the blandishments of Lady St Edmunds. As to Miss Arnold, her faults, like my own, I could review only to excuse them; or rather, they entered my mind only to be banished by some affectionate recollection. Whatever has long ministered to our gratification, is at last valued without reference to its worth; and thus I valued Juliet. Nay, perhaps my perverted heart loved her the more for her deficiency in virtues, which must have oppressed me with a painful

sense of inferiority. In short, "I could have better spared a better" person. But, amidst my present "compunctious visitings," I thought of atoning for my former rebellions by one heroic act of submission. I resolved that, in compliance with Miss Mortimer's advice, I would refrain from urging my father to detain Miss Arnold as an inmate of the family. I was, however, spared this effort of self-command. The termination of Miss Arnold's visit was never again mentioned, either by herself, or by my father. In fact, she had become almost as necessary to him as to me; and I have reason to believe, that he was very little pleased with Miss Mortimer's interference on the subject.

But the more serious part of my friend's letter was that which disquieted me the most. The darkness of midnight was around me. The glittering baubles which dazzled me withdrawn for a time, I saw, not without alarm, the great realities which she presented to my mind. I could not disguise from myself the uselessness of my past life; and I shrunk under a confused

dread of vengeance. In the silence, in the loneliness of night,—without defence against that awful voice which I had so often refused to hear,—I trembled, as conscience loudly reproached me with the bounties of my benefactor, and the ingratitude with which they were repaid. A sense of unworthiness wrung from me some natural tears of remorse; a sense of danger produced some vague desires of reformation; and this, I fancied, was repentance. How many useless or poisonous nostrums of our own compounding do we call by the name of the true restorative!

But though false medicines may assume the appellation, and sometimes even the semblance of the real, they cannot counterfeit its effects. The cures which they perform are at best partial or transient,—the true medicine alone gives permanent and universal health. I passed the night under the scourge of conscience; and the strokes were repeated, though at lengthening intervals, for several days. I was resolved, that I would no longer be an unprofitable servant; that I would devote

part of my time and my fortune to the service of the Giver; that I would earn the gratitude of the poor,—the applauses of my own conscience,—the approbation of Heaven! Of the permanence of my resolutions,—of my own ability to put them in practice,—it never entered my imagination to doubt. I remembered having heard my duties summed up in three comprehensive epithets, "sober, righteous, and godly." To be "righteous" was, I thought, an injunction chiefly adapted to the poor. In the limited sense which I affixed to the command, the rich had no temptation to break it; at all events I did not,—for I defrauded no one. "Godly," I certainly intended one day or other to become; but for the present I deferred fixing upon the particulars of this change. It was better not to attempt too much at once,—so I determined to begin by living "soberly." I would withdraw a little from the gay world in which I had of late been so busy. I would pass more of my time at home. I would find out some poor but amiable family, who had perhaps seen better days.

I would assist and comfort them; and, confining myself to a simple neatness in my dress, would expend upon them the liberal allowance of my indulgent father. I was presently transported by fancy to a scene of elegant distress, and theatrical gratitude, common enough in her airy regions, but exceedingly scarce upon the face of this vulgar earth. The idea was delightful. "Who," cried I, "would forfeit the pleasures of benevolence for toys which nature and good sense can so well dispense with? And, after all, what shall I lose by retreating a little from a world where envy and malice are watchful to distort the veriest casualties into the hideous forms upon which slander loves to scowl! No doubt, Lady Maria's malice will find food in my new way of life,—but no matter, I will despise it." It is so easy to despise malice in our closets! "Mr Maitland," thought I, "will approve of my altered conduct;" and then I considered that retirement would allow me to make observations on the "interest" which I had excited in Mr Maitland; for, in the present so-

bered state of my mind, I thought of making observations, rather than experiments.

Circumstances occurred to quicken the ardour with which vanity pursued those observations. Maitland had hitherto been content to perform the duties of a quiet citizen. Secure of respect, and careless of admiration, he had been satisfied to promote by conscientious industry his means of usefulness, and, with conscientious benevolence, to devote those means to their proper end. With characteristic reserve, he had withdrawn even from the gratitude of mankind. He had been the unknown, though liberal benefactor of unfriended genius. He had given liberty to the debtor who scarcely knew of his existence; and had cheered many a heart which throbbed not at the name of Maitland. But now the name of Maitland became the theme of every tongue; for, in the cause of justice, he had put forth the powers of his manly mind; and orators, such as our senates must hope no more to own, had hung with warm applause, or with silent rapture, upon the eloquence of Maitland! Himself a

West India merchant, and interested, of course, in the continuation of the slave-trade, he opposed, with all the zeal of honour and humanity, this vilest traffic that ever degraded the name and the character of man. In the senate of his country he lifted up his testimony against this foul blot upon her fame,—this tiger-outrage upon fellow-man,—this daring violation of the image of God. Alas! that a more lasting page than mine must record, that the cry of the oppressed often came up before British senates, ere they would deign to hear! But, amidst the tergiversation of friends, and the virulence of foes, some still maintained the cause of justice. They poured forth the eloquence which makes the wicked tremble, and the good man exult in the strength of virtue. The base ear of interest refused indeed to hear; but the words of truth were not scattered to the winds. All England, all Europe, caught the inspiration; and burnt with an ardour which reason and humanity had failed to kindle, till they borrowed the eloquence of Maitland.

And now his praise burst upon me from every quarter. Those who affected intimacy with the great, retailed it as the private sentiment of ministers and princes. Our political augurs foretold his rise to the highest dignities of the state. Those who love to give advice were eager that he should forsake his humbler profession, and devote his extraordinary talents to the good of his country. The newspapers panegyrized him; and fashion, rank, and beauty, crowded round the happy few who could give information concerning the age, manners, and appearance of Mr Maitland. Not all his wisdom, nor all his worth, could ever have moved my vain mind so much as did these tributes of applause, from persons unqualified to estimate either. When I heard admiration dwell upon his name, my heart bounded at the recollection of the "interest" which he had expressed in me; and again I wondered whether that interest were love? I would have given a universe to be able to answer "yes." To see the eye which could penetrate the soul hang captive on a glance of mine!—to hear the

voice which could awe a senate falter when it spoke to me!—to feel the hand which was judged worthy to hold the helm of state tremble at my touch!—the very thought was inspiration. Let not the forgiving smile which belongs to the innocent weakness of nature be lavished on a vice which leads to such cold, such heartless selfishness. Let it rather be remembered that avarice, oppression, cruelty, all the iron vices which harden the heart of man, are not more rigidly selfish, more wantonly regardless of another's feelings, than unrestrained, active vanity.

Meanwhile, Mr Maitland allowed me abundant opportunities for observation. Instead of withdrawing from us after Miss Mortimer's departure, as I feared he would, he visited us more frequently than ever. He sometimes breakfasted with us in his way to the city; often returned when the House adjourned in the evening; and in short seemed inclined to spend with us the greater part of his few abstemious hours of leisure. Yet even my vanity could trace nothing in his behaviour which

might explain this constant attendance. On the contrary, his manner, often cold, was sometimes even severe. He was naturally far from being morose; and often casting off the cares of business, he would catch infectious spirits from my lightness of heart; yet even in those moments, somewhat painful would not unfrequently appear to cross his mind, and he would turn from me as if half in sorrow, half in anger. I could perceive that he listened with interest when I spoke; but that interest seemed of no pleasing kind. He often, indeed, looked amused, but seldom approving; and if once or twice I caught a more tender glance, it was one of such mournful kindness as less resembled love than compassion.

All this was provokingly unsatisfactory. I found that it was vain to expect discoveries from observation; I was obliged to have recourse to experiment; and it is not to be imagined what tricks I practised to steal poor Maitland's fancied secret. So mean is vanity! and so little security have they who submit to its power, that they

may not stoop to faults the most remote from their natural tendencies. I flourished the arm of which he had praised the beauty, that I might watch whether his gaze followed it in admiration. I was laboriously "graceful;" and sported my "*naif* sensibility" till it was any thing but *naif*. I obtruded my "lovely singleness of mind," till, I believe, I should have become a disgusting mass of affectation, had it not been for the manly plainness of Mr Maitland. He at first appeared to look with surprise upon my altered demeanour; then fairly shewed me by his manner that he detected my little arts, and that he was alternately grieved to find me condescending to plot, and angry that I could plot no better. "That certainly is the finest arm in England," whispered he one evening when I had been leaning upon it, exactly opposite to him, for five minutes, "so now you may put on your glove. Nay, instead of frowning, you should thank me for that blush; for though pride and anger may have some share in it, it is not unbecoming, since it is natural." I was sullen for a little, and muttered some-

thing about "impertinence,"—but I never flourished my arm again.

"Lady Maria de Burgh is certainly the most beautiful girl in London," said I to Miss Arnold one day when the subject was in debate. This was a fit of artificial candour; for I had observed, that Maitland detested all symptoms of animosity; and I appealed to him, in hopes that he would at least except me from his affirmative. "Yes," returned he, directing, by one flash of his eloquent eye, the warning distinctly to me, "Yes: But she reminds me of the dog in the fable. Nature has given her beauty enough; but she grasps at more, and thus loses all."

Affectation seemed likely to be as unavailing as watchfulness; yet, the longer my search lasted, the more eager it became. Whatever occupies attention long, will occupy it much; and, in my vain investigation, I often endured the anxiety of the philosopher, who, having sailed to the antipodes to observe the transit of Venus, saw, at the critical hour, a cloud rise to obstruct his observations. "How shall I fathom

the heart of that impenetrable being!" exclaimed I to my confidante one day, when, in pursuance of my new plan of soberness and charity, I sat learning to knit a child's stocking at the rate of a row in the hour.

"Bless me, Ellen," returned Miss Arnold, "what signifies the heart of a musty old bachelor?"

"I don't know what you call old, Juliet; but, in my opinion, I should be more than woman, or less, if I could suspect my power over such a man as Maitland, and not wish to ascertain the point."

"I do not believe," returned Juliet, "that any woman upon earth has power over him,—a cold, cynical, sarcastic ——."

"You forget," interrupted I, "that he has owned a strong interest in me;" for, in the soft hour of returning confidence, I had shewed his billet to my friend.

"Yes," answered Miss Arnold, "that is true; but don't you think he may once have been a lover of your mother's, and that on her account ——"

"My mother's!" cried I. "Ridiculous!

impossible! Maitland must have been a mere child when my mother married."

"Let me see," said Miss Arnold, with calculating brow, "Your mother, had she been alive, would now have been near forty."

"And Maitland, I am sure, cannot be more than two and thirty."

"Is he not?" said Miss Arnold, who had ventured as far as she thought prudent. Silence ensued; for I was now in no very complacent frame. Miss Arnold was the first to speak. "Perhaps," said she, "Mr Maitland only wishes to conceal his own sentiments, till he makes sure of yours,—perhaps he would be secure of success before he condescends to sue."

"If I thought the man were such a coxcomb," cried I, "I would have no mercy in tormenting. I detest pride."

"If I have guessed right," pursued Miss Arnold, "a little fit of jealousy would do excellently well to prove him, and punish him at the same time; I am sure he deserves it very well, for making so much mystery of nothing." A bystander might

have indulged a melancholy smile at my detestation of pride, and Miss Arnold's antipathy to mystery. But our abhorrence of evil is never more vehemently, perhaps never more sincerely expressed, than when our own besetting sin thwarts us in the conduct of others.

"But," said I, for experience had begun to teach me some awe for Maitland's penetration, "what if he should see through our design, and only laugh at us and our manœuvring?"

"Oh! as for that," returned Juliet, "choose his rival well, and there is no sort of danger. A dull, every-day creature, to be sure, would never do: but fix upon something handsome, lively, fashionable, and it must appear the most natural thing in the world. By the bye, did he ever seem to suspect any one in particular?"

"What! don't you remember that, in his note, he speaks with tolerably decent alarm of Lord Frederick?"

"Oh! true," returned Miss Arnold, "I had forgotten.—Well, do you think you could pitch upon a better flirt?"

Now my friend knew that I happene at that moment to have no choice of flir for, besides that Lord Frederick was the ly dangler whom I had ever systematical encouraged, he was the only one of my present admirers who could boast any particular advantages of figure or situation. "He might answer the purpose well enough," returned I, "if we knew how to bring Maitland and him together; but you know he does not visit here, since his foolish old father thought fit to interfere."

"That may be easily managed," replied Juliet. "The slightest hint from you would bring him back."

I had once determined to listen with caution to Miss Arnold's advice, where Lord Frederick was concerned; but now her advice favoured my inclination; and that which ought to have made me doubly suspicious of her counsels, was the cause why I followed them without hesitation. The hint to Lord Frederick was given at the first opportunity, and proved as effectual as its instigator had foretold. Still, however, some contrivance was necessary to

bring the rivals together; for the man of ...hion and the man of business seldom ...l their visits at the same hour. At ...ngth I effected an interview; and never was visitor more partially distinguished than Lord Frederick. We placed ourselves together upon a sofa, apart from the rest of the company, and forthwith entered upon all the evolutions of flirtation; for I whispered without a secret; laughed without a joke; frowned without anger; and talked without discretion.

It was Miss Arnold's allotted province to watch the effect of these fooleries upon Maitland; but I could not refrain from sharing her task, by stealing at times a glance towards him. These glances animated my exertions; for I was almost sure that he looked disturbed; and fancied, more than once, that I saw his colour change. But if he was uneasy at witnessing Lord Frederick's success, he did not long subject himself to the pain; for, after having endured my folly for a quarter of an hour, without offering it the least interruption, he took a very frozen leave, and departed.

I laughed at his coldness; convinced, as I now was, that it was only the pettishness of jealousy. Miss Arnold, however, gently insinuated a contrary opinion. "She might indeed be mistaken,—she could not pretend to my talent for piercing disguise; but she must confess, that Maitland had succeeded in concealing from her every trace of emotion." It may easily be imagined, that this opinion, however seasoned with flattery, and however cautiously expressed, was not very agreeable to me. To dispel my friend's doubts, rather than my own, I proposed a second trial; but some time elapsed before that trial could be made. In the mean while, Lord Frederick failed not to profit by his recent admission. His visits even became so frequent, that, dreading an altercation with my father, I began to wish that I had been more guarded in my invitation.

But this did not prevent me from re-acting my coquetry the next time that the supposed rivals met in my presence. After this second interview, Miss Arnold, though with great deference, persisted in her former sentence; and I was unwillingly obliged to

soften somewhat the vehemence of my dissent; for if Maitland was wounded by my preference of Lord Frederick, he certainly endured the smart with Spartan fortitude. I was somewhat disconcerted; and should have laid aside all my vain surmises, had not the recollection of Maitland's note constantly returned to strengthen them.

Our experiments, however, were brought to a close, by a disclosure of my father's. "Miss Percy," said he one day, taking his posture of exhortation, "I think Lord Frederick de Burgh seems to wait upon you every day. Now, after what has past, this is indiscreet; and therefore it is my desire that you give him no encouragement to frequent my house. I would have put a stop to the thing at once, but I can perceive that you don't care for the puppy; and Maitland, who is a very sharp fellow, makes the very same observation."

Now, I knew that this was Mr Percy's method of adopting the stray remarks which he judged worthy to be fathered by himself; and I fully understood, that all my

to Lor... k had fail-
upon Maitland. What could
...atious? I had no resource, how-
ever; except, like the fox in the fable, to
despise what was unattainable. I vowed
that I would concern myself no more with
a person who was too wise to have the
common feelings of humanity. I assured
my confidante that his sentiments were a
matter of perfect indifference to me. I
hope for my conscience' sake, that this was
true, for I repeated it at least ten times
every day.

Meanwhile, in the ardour of my investigation, I had, from time to time, deferred my purposed visit to Miss Mortimer. My heart had not failed to reproach me with this delay; but I had constantly soothed it with promises for to-morrow,—to-morrow, that word of evil omen to all purposes of reformation! At last, however, I was resolved to repair my neglect; for the day after Maitland's quick-sightedness happened to be Sunday; and how could the Sabbath be better employed than in a necessary and pious work? It is no new thing to

see that da[illegible] [illegible]d with [illegible] works which [illegible]ght as well h[illegible] to any other. Instead, therefor[illegible] to hear a fashionable preacher, I order[illegible] my carriage to ——.

END OF VOL. I.

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